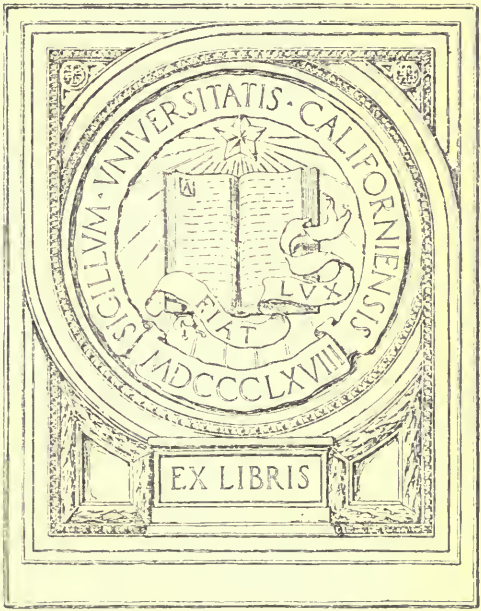
THE WILDERNESS HUNTER

THE GIFT OF
FLORENCE V. V. DICKEY
TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



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Drawn by Henry Sandham

A SHOT FROM THE VERANDAH

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TO

E. K. R.

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626447

"They saw the silences
Move by and beckon; saw the forms,
The very beards, of burly storms,
And heard them talk like sounding seas . . .
They saw the snowy mountains rolled
And heaved along the nameless lands
Like mighty billows; saw the gold
Of awful sunsets; saw the blush
Of sudden dawn, and felt the hush
Of heaven when the day sat down
And hid his face in dusky hands."

Joaquin Miller.

"In vain the speeding of shyness;
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods . . .
. . . where geese nip their food with short jerks,
Where sundown shadows lengthen over the limitless prairie,
Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spaead of the square miles, far and near,
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and ice-clad trees . . .
The moose, large as an ox, cornered by hunters, plunging with his forefeet, the hoofs as sharp as knives . . .
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk, the bed of hemlock boughs, and the bear-skin."

Walt Whitman.

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PREFACE.

FOR a number of years much of my life was spent either in the wilderness or on the borders of the settled country—if, indeed, "settled" is a term that can rightly be applied to the vast, scantily peopled regions where cattle-ranching is the only regular industry. During this time I hunted much, among the mountains and on the plains, both as a pastime and to procure hides, meat, and robes for use on the ranch; and it was my good luck to kill all the various kinds of large game that can properly be considered to belong to temperate North America.

In hunting, the finding and killing of the game is after all but a part of the whole. The free, self-reliant, adventurous life, with its rugged and stalwart democracy; the wild surroundings, the grand beauty of the scenery, the chance to study the ways and habits of the woodland creatures—all these unite to give to the career of the wilderness hunter its peculiar charm. The chase is among the best of all national pastimes; it cultivates that vigorous manliness for the lack of which in a nation, as in an individual, the possession of no other qualities can possibly atone.

No one, but he who has partaken thereof, can understand the keen delight of hunting in

lonely lands. For him is the joy of the horse well ridden and the rifle well held; for him the long days of toil and hardship, resolutely endured, and crowned at the end with triumph. In after years there shall come forever to his mind the memory of endless prairies shimmering in the bright sun; of vast snow-clad wastes lying desolate under gray skies; of the melancholy marshes; of the rush of mighty rivers; of the breath of the evergreen forest in summer; of the crooning of ice-armored pines at the touch of the winds of winter; of cataracts roaring between hoary mountain masses; of all the innumerable sights and sounds of the wilderness; of its immensity and mystery; and of the silences that brood in its still depths.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

SAGAMORE HILL,
June, 1893.

THE WILDERNESS HUNTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE AMERICAN WILDERNESS; WILDERNESS HUNTERS AND WILDERNESS GAME.

MANIFOLD are the shapes taken by the American wilderness. In the east, from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi valley, lies a land of magnificent hardwood forest. In endless variety and beauty, the trees cover the ground, save only where they have been cleared away by man, or where towards the west the expanse of the forest is broken by fertile prairies. Towards the north, this region of hardwood trees merges insensibly into the southern extension of the great sub-arctic forest; here the silver stems of birches gleam against the sombre background of coniferous evergreens. In the southeast again, by the hot, oozy coasts of the South Atlantic and the Gulf, the forest becomes semi-tropical; palms wave their feathery fronds, and the tepid swamps teem with reptile life.

Some distance beyond the Mississippi,

stretching from Texas to North Dakota, and westward to the Rocky Mountains, lies the plains country. This is a region of light rainfall, where the ground is clad with short grass, while cottonwood trees fringe the courses of the winding plains streams; streams that are alternately turbid torrents and mere dwindling threads of water. The great stretches of natural pasture are broken by gray sage-brush plains, and tracts of strangely shaped and colored Bad Lands; sun-scorched wastes in summer, and in winter arctic in their iron desolation. Beyond the plains rise the Rocky Mountains, their flanks covered with coniferous woods; but the trees are small, and do not ordinarily grow very closely together. Towards the north the forest becomes denser, and the peaks higher; and glaciers creep down towards the valleys from the fields of everlasting snow. The brooks are brawling, trout-filled torrents; the swift rivers foam over rapid and cataract, on their way to one or the other of the two great oceans.

Southwest of the Rockies evil and terrible deserts stretch for leagues and leagues, mere waterless wastes of sandy plain and barren mountain, broken here and there by narrow strips of fertile ground. Rain rarely falls, and there are no clouds to dim the brazen sun. The rivers run in deep canyons, or are swallowed by the burning sand; the smaller watercourses are dry throughout the greater part of the year.

Beyond this desert region rise the sunny Sierras of California, with their flower-clad slopes and groves of giant trees; and north

of them, along the coast, the rain-shrouded mountain chains of Oregon and Washington, matted with the towering growth of the mighty evergreen forest.

The white hunters, who from time to time first penetrated the different parts of this wilderness, found themselves in such hunting grounds as those wherein, long ages before, their Old-World forefathers had dwelt; and the game they chased was much the same as that their lusty barbarian ancestors followed, with weapons of bronze and of iron, in the dim years before history dawned. As late as the end of the seventeenth century the turbulent village nobles of Lithuania and Livonia hunted the bear, the bison, the elk, the wolf, and the stag, and hung the spoils in their smoky wooden palaces; and so, two hundred years later, the free hunters of Montana, in the interludes between hazardous mining quests and bloody Indian campaigns, hunted game almost or quite the same in kind, through the cold mountain forests surrounding the Yellowstone and Flathead lakes, and decked their log cabins and ranch houses with the hides and horns of the slaughtered beasts.

Zoologically speaking, the north temperate zones of the Old and New Worlds are very similar, differing from one another much less than they do from the various regions south of them, or than these regions differ among themselves. The untrodden American wilderness resembles both in game and physical character the forests, the mountains, and the steppes of the Old World as it was at the

beginning of our era. Great woods of pine and fir, birch and beech, oak and chestnut; streams where the chief game fish are spotted trout and silvery salmon; grouse of various kinds as the most common game birds; all these the hunter finds as characteristic of the New World as of the Old. So it is with most of the beasts of the chase, and so also with the fur-bearing animals that furnish to the trapper alike his life work and his means of livelihood. The bear, wolf, bison, moose, caribou, wapiti, deer, and bighorn, the lynx, fox, wolverine, sable, mink, ermine, beaver, badger, and otter of both worlds are either identical or more or less closely kin to one another. Sometimes of the two forms, that found in the Old World is the largest. Perhaps more often the reverse is true, the American beast being superior in size. This is markedly the case with the wapiti, which is merely a giant brother of the European stag, exactly as the fisher is merely a very large cousin of the European sable or marten. The extraordinary prong-buck, the only hollow-horned ruminant which sheds its horns annually, is a distant representative of the Old-World antelopes of the steppes; the queer white antelope-goat has for its nearest kinsfolk certain Himalayan species. Of the animals commonly known to our hunters and trappers, only a few, such as the cougar, peccary, raccoon, possum (and among birds the wild turkey), find their nearest representatives and type forms in tropical America.

Of course this general resemblance does not mean identity. The differences in plant life

and animal life, no less than in the physical features of the land, are sufficiently marked to give the American wilderness a character distinctly its own. Some of the most characteristic of the woodland animals, some of those which have most vividly impressed themselves on the imagination of the hunters and pioneer settlers, are the very ones which have no Old-World representatives. The wild turkey is in every way the king of American game birds. Among the small beasts the coon and the possum are those which have left the deepest traces in the humbler lore of the frontier; exactly as the cougar—usually under the name of panther or mountain lion—is a favorite figure in the wilder hunting tales. Nowhere else is there anything to match the wealth of the eastern hardwood forests, in number, variety, and beauty of trees; nowhere else is it possible to find conifers approaching in size the giant redwoods and sequoias of the Pacific slope. Nature here is generally on a larger scale than in the Old-World home of our race. The lakes are like inland seas, the rivers, like arms of the sea. Among stupendous mountain chains there are valleys and canyons of fathomless depth and incredible beauty and majesty. There are tropical swamps, and sad, frozen marshes; deserts and Death Valleys, weird and evil, and the strange wonderland of the Wyoming geyser region. The waterfalls are rivers rushing over precipices; the prairies seem without limit, and the forest never ending.

At the time when we first became a nation,

nine tenths of the territory now included within the limits of the United States was wilderness. It was during the stirring and troubled years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Revolution that the most adventurous hunters, the vanguard of the hardy army of pioneer settlers, first crossed the Alleghanies, and roamed far and wide through the lonely, danger-haunted forests which filled the No-man's-land lying between the Tennessee and the Ohio. They waged ferocious warfare with Shawnee and Wyandott and wrought huge havoc among the herds of game with which the forest teemed. While the first Continental Congress was still sitting, Daniel Boone, the archetype of the American hunter, was leading his bands of tall backwoods riflemen to settle in the beautiful country of Kentucky, where the red and the white warriors strove with such obstinate rage that both races alike grew to know it as "the dark and bloody ground."

Boone and his fellow-hunters were the heralds of the oncoming civilization, the pioneers in that conquest of the wilderness which has at last been practically achieved in our own day. Where they pitched their camps and built their log huts or stockaded hamlets, towns grew up, and men who were tillers of the soil, not mere wilderness wanderers, thronged in to take and hold the land. Then, ill-at-ease among the settlements for which they had themselves made ready the way, and fretted even by the slight restraints of the rude and uncouth semi-civilization of the border, the restless hunters moved onward

into the yet unbroken wilds where the game dwelt and the red tribes marched forever to war and hunting. Their untamable souls ever found something congenial and beyond measure attractive in the lawless freedom of the lives of the very savages against whom they warred so bitterly.

Step by step, often leap by leap, the frontier of settlement was pushed westward; and ever from before its advance fled the warrior tribes of the red men and the scarcely less intractable array of white Indian fighters and game hunters. When the Revolutionary war was at its height, George Rogers Clarke, himself a mighty hunter of the old backwoods type, led his handful of hunter-soldiers to the conquest of the French towns of the Illinois. This was but one of the many notable feats of arms performed by the wild soldiery of the backwoods. Clad in their fringed and tasselled hunting shirts of buckskin or homespun, with coonskin caps and deer-hide leggings and moccasins, with tomahawk and scalping knife thrust into their bead-worked belts, and long rifles in hand, they fought battle after battle of the most bloody character, both against the Indians, as at the Great Kanawha, at the Fallen Timbers, and at Tippecanoe, and against more civilized foes, as at King's Mountain, New Orleans, and the River Thames.

Soon after the beginning of the present century Louisiana fell into our hands, and the most daring hunters and explorers pushed through the forests of the Mississippi valley to the great plains, steered across these vast

seas of grass to the Rocky Mountains, and then through their rugged defiles onwards to the Pacific Ocean. In every work of exploration, and in all the earlier battles with the original lords of the western and southwestern lands, whether Indian or Mexican, the adventurous hunters played the leading part; while close behind came the swarm of hard, dogged, border-farmers,—a masterful race, good fighters and good breeders, as all masterful races must be.

Very characteristic in its way was the career of quaint, honest, fearless Davy Crockett, the Tennessee rifleman and Whig Congressman, perhaps the best shot in all our country, whose skill in the use of his favorite weapon passed into a proverb, and who ended his days by a hero's death in the ruins of the Alamo. An even more notable man was another mighty hunter, Houston, who when a boy ran away to the Indians; who while still a lad returned to his own people to serve under Andrew Jackson in the campaigns which that greatest of all the backwoods leaders waged against the Creeks, the Spaniards, and the British. He was wounded at the storming of one of the strongholds of Red Eagle's doomed warriors, and returned to his Tennessee home to rise to high civil honor, and become the foremost man of his State. Then, while Governor of Tennessee, in a sudden fit of moody anger, and of mad longing for the unfettered life of the wilderness, he abandoned his office, his people, and his race, and fled to the Cherokees beyond the Mississippi. For years he lived as one of their chiefs;

until one day, as he lay in ignoble ease and sloth, a rider from the south, from the rolling plains of the San Antonio and Brazos, brought word that the Texans were up, and in doubtful struggle striving to wrest their freedom from the lancers and carbineers of Santa Anna. Then his dark soul flamed again into burning life; riding by night and day he joined the risen Texans, was hailed by them as a heaven-sent leader, and at the San Jacinto led them on to the overthrow of the Mexican host. Thus the stark hunter, who had been alternately Indian fighter and Indian chief, became the President of the new Republic, and, after its admission into the United States, a Senator at Washington; and, to his high honor, he remained to the end of his days staunchly loyal to the flag of the Union.

By the time that Crockett fell, and Houston became the darling leader of the Texans, the typical hunter and Indian fighter had ceased to be a backwoodsman; he had become a plains-man, or mountain-man; for the frontier, east of which he never willingly went, had been pushed beyond the Mississippi. Restless, reckless, and hardy, he spent years of his life in lonely wanderings through the Rockies as a trapper; he guarded the slowly moving caravans, which for purposes of trade journeyed over the dangerous Santa Fé trail; he guided the large parties of frontier settlers who, driving before them their cattle, with all their household goods in their white-topped wagons, spent perilous months and seasons on their weary way to Oregon or California.

Joining in bands, the stalwart, skin-clad riflemen waged ferocious war on the Indians, scarcely more savage than themselves, or made long raids for plunder and horses against the outlying Mexican settlements. The best, the bravest, the most modest of them all was the renowned Kit Carson. He was not only a mighty hunter, a daring fighter, a finder of trails, and maker of roads through the unknown, untrodden wilderness, but also a real leader of men. Again and again he crossed and re-crossed the continent, from the Mississippi to the Pacific; he guided many of the earliest military and exploring expeditions of the United States Government; he himself led the troops in victorious campaigns against Apache and Navahoe; and in the Civil War he was made a colonel of the Federal army.

After him came many other hunters. Most were pure-blooded Americans, but many were Creole Frenchmen, Mexicans, or even members of the so-called civilized Indian tribes, notably the Delawares. Wide were their wanderings, many their strange adventures in the chase, bitter their unending warfare with the red lords of the land. Hither and thither they roamed, from the desolate, burning deserts of the Colorado to the grassy plains of the Upper Missouri; from the rolling Texas prairies, bright beneath their sunny skies, to the high snow peaks of the northern Rockies, or the giant pine forests, and soft rainy weather, of the coasts of Puget Sound. Their main business was trapping, furs being the only articles yielded by the wilderness, as they knew it, which were both valuable and

portable. These early hunters were all trappers likewise, and, indeed, used their rifles only to procure meat or repel attacks. The chief of the fur-bearing animals they followed was the beaver, which abounded in the streams of the plains and mountains; in the far north they also trapped otter, mink, sable, and fisher. They married squaws from among the Indian tribes, with which they happened for the moment to be at peace; they acted as scouts for the United States troops in their campaigns against the tribes with which they happened to be at war.

Soon after the Civil War the life of these hunters, taken as a class, entered on its final stage. The Pacific coast was already fairly well settled, and there were a few mining camps in the Rockies; but most of this Rocky Mountains region, and the entire stretch of plains country proper, the vast belt of level or rolling grass land lying between the Rio Grande and the Saskatchewan, still remained primeval wilderness, inhabited only by roving hunters and formidable tribes of Indian nomads, and by the huge herds of game on which they preyed. Beaver swarmed in the streams and yielded a rich harvest to the trapper; but trapping was no longer the mainstay of the adventurous plainsmen. Foremost among the beasts of the chase, on account of its numbers, its size, and its economic importance, was the bison or American buffalo; its innumerable multitudes darkened the limitless prairies. As the transcontinental railroads were pushed towards completion, and the tide of settlement rolled onwards

with ever increasing rapidity, buffalo robes became of great value. The hunters forthwith turned their attention mainly to the chase of the great clumsy beasts, slaughtering them by hundreds of thousands for their hides; sometimes killing them on horseback, but more often on foot, by still-hunting, with the heavy long-range Sharp's rifle. Throughout the fifteen years during which this slaughter lasted, a succession of desperate wars was waged with the banded tribes of the Horse Indians. All the time, in unending succession, long trains of big white-topped wagons crept slowly westward across the prairies, marking the steady oncoming of the frontier settlers.

By the close of 1883 the last buffalo herd was destroyed. The beaver were trapped out of all the streams, or their numbers so thinned that it no longer paid to follow them. The last formidable Indian war had been brought to a successful close. The flood of the incoming whites had risen over the land; tongues of settlement reached from the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains, and from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific. The frontier had come to an end; it had vanished. With it vanished also the old race of wilderness hunters, the men who spent all their days in the lonely wilds, and who killed game as their sole means of livelihood. Great stretches of wilderness still remain in the Rocky Mountains, and here and there in the plains country, exactly as much smaller tracts of wild land are to be found in the Alleghanies and northern New York and New England; and on these

tracts occasional hunters and trappers still linger; but as a distinctive class, with a peculiar and important position in American life, they no longer exist.

There were other men beside the professional hunters, who lived on the borders of the wilderness, and followed hunting, not only as a pastime, but also as yielding an important portion of their subsistence. The frontier farmers were all hunters. In the eastern backwoods, and in certain places in the west, as in Oregon, these adventurous tillers of the soil were the pioneers among the actual settlers; in the Rockies their places were taken by the miners, and on the great plains by the ranchmen and cowboys, the men who lived in the saddle, guarding their branded herds of horses and horned stock. Almost all of the miners and cowboys were obliged on occasions to turn hunters.

Moreover, the regular army which played so important a part in all the later stages of the winning of the west produced its full share of mighty hunters. The later Indian wars were fought principally by the regulars. The West Point officer and his little company of trained soldiers appeared abreast of the first hardy cattlemen and miners. The ordinary settlers rarely made their appearance until in campaign after campaign, always inconceivably wearing and harassing, and often very bloody in character, the scarred and tattered troops had broken and overthrown the most formidable among the Indian tribes. Faithful, uncomplaining, unflinching, the soldiers wearing the national uniform lived for many weary years

at their lonely little posts, facing unending toil and danger with quiet endurance, surrounded by the desolation of vast solitudes, and menaced by the most merciless of foes. Hunting was followed not only as a sport, but also as the only means of keeping the posts and the expeditionary trains in meat. Many of the officers became equally proficient as marksmen and hunters. The three most famous Indian fighters since the Civil War, Generals Custer, Miles, and Crook, were all keen and successful followers of the chase.

Of American big game the bison, almost always known as the buffalo, was the largest and most important to man. When the first white settlers landed in Virginia the bison ranged east of the Alleghanies almost to the sea-coast, westward to the dry deserts lying beyond the Rocky Mountains, northward to the Great Slave Lake and southward to Chihuahua. It was a beast of the forests and mountains, in the Alleghanies no less than in the Rockies; but its true home was on the prairies, and the high plains. Across these it roamed, hither and thither, in herds of enormous, of incredible magnitude; herds so large that they covered the waving grass land for hundreds of square leagues, and when on the march occupied days and days in passing a given point. But the seething myriads of shaggy-maned wild cattle vanished with remarkable and melancholy rapidity before the inroads of the white hunters, and the steady march of the oncoming settlers. Now they are on the point of extinction. Two or three hundred are left in that great national game

preserve, the Yellowstone Park; and it is said that others still remain in the wintry desolation of Athabasca. Elsewhere only a few individuals exist—probably considerably less than half a hundred all told—scattered in small parties in the wildest and most remote and inaccessible portions of the Rocky Mountains. A bison bull is the largest American animal. His huge bulk, his short, curved black horns, the shaggy mane clothing his great neck and shoulders, give him a look of ferocity which his conduct belies. Yet he is truly a grand and noble beast, and his loss from our prairies and forest is as keenly regretted by the lover of nature and of wild life as by the hunter.

Next to the bison in size, and much superior in height to it and to all other American game—for it is taller than the tallest horse—comes the moose, or broad-horned elk. It is a strange, uncouth-looking beast, with very long legs, short thick neck, a big, ungainly head, a swollen nose, and huge shovel horns. Its home is in the cold, wet pine and spruce forests, which stretch from the sub-arctic region of Canada southward in certain places across our frontier. Two centuries ago it was found as far south as Massachusetts. It has now been exterminated from its former haunts in northern New York and Vermont, and is on the point of vanishing from northern Michigan. It is still found in northern Maine and northeastern Minnesota and in portions of northern Idaho and Washington; while along the Rockies it extends its range southward through western Montana to northwest-

ern Wyoming, south of the Tetons. In 1884 I saw the fresh hide of one that was killed in the Bighorn Mountains.

The wapiti, or round-horned elk, like the bison, and unlike the moose, had its centre of abundance in the United States, though extending northward into Canada. Originally its range reached from ocean to ocean and it went in herds of thousands of individuals; but it has suffered more from the persecution of hunters than any other game except the bison. By the beginning of this century it had been exterminated in most localities east of the Mississippi; but a few lingered on for many years in the Alleghanies. Col. Cecil Clay informs me that an Indian whom he knew killed one in Pennsylvania in 1869. A very few still exist here and there in northern Michigan and Minnesota, and in one or two spots on the western boundary of Nebraska and the Dakotas; but it is now properly a beast of the wooded western mountains. It is still plentiful in western Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana, and in parts of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. Though not as large as the moose it is the most beautiful and stately of all animals of the deer kind, and its antlers are marvels of symmetrical grandeur.

The woodland caribou is inferior to the wapiti both in size and symmetry. The tips of the many branches of its long irregular antlers are slightly palmated. Its range is the same as that of the moose, save that it does not go so far southward. Its hoofs are long and round; even larger than the long,

oval hoofs of the moose, and much larger than those of the wapiti. The tracks of all three can be told apart at a glance, and cannot be mistaken for the footprints of other game. Wapiti tracks, however, look much like those of yearling and two-year-old cattle, unless the ground is steep or muddy, in which case the marks of the false hoofs appear, the joints of wapiti being more flexible than those of domestic stock.

The whitetail deer is now, as it always has been, the best known and most abundant of American big game, and though its numbers have been greatly thinned it is still found in almost every State of the Union. The common blacktail or mule deer, which has likewise been sadly thinned in numbers, though once extraordinarily abundant, extends from the great plains to the Pacific; but is supplanted on the Puget Sound coast by the Columbian blacktail. The delicate, heart-shaped footprints of all three are nearly indistinguishable; when the animal is running the hoof points are of course separated. The track of the antelope is more oval, growing squarer with age. Mountain sheep leave footmarks of a squarer shape, the points of the hoof making little indentations in the soil, well apart, even when the animal is only walking; and a yearling's track is not unlike that made by a big prong-buck when striding rapidly with the toes well apart. White-goat tracks are also square, and as large as those of the sheep; but there is less indentation of the hoof points, which come nearer together.

The antelope, or prong-buck, was once

found in abundance from the eastern edge of the great plains to the Pacific, but it has everywhere diminished in numbers, and has been exterminated along the eastern and western borders of its former range. The bighorn, or mountain sheep, is found in the Rocky Mountains from northern Mexico to Alaska; and in the United States from the Coast and Cascade ranges to the Bad Lands of the western edges of the Dakotas, wherever there are mountain chains or tracts of rugged hills. It was never very abundant, and, though it has become less so, it has held its own better than most game. The white goat, however, alone among our game animals, has positively increased in numbers since the advent of settlers; because white hunters rarely follow it, and the Indians who once sought its skin for robes now use blankets instead. Its true home is in Alaska and Canada, but it crosses our borders along the lines of the Rockies and Cascades, and a few small isolated colonies are found here and there southward to California and New Mexico.

The cougar and wolf, once common throughout the United States, have now completely disappeared from all save the wildest regions. The black bear holds its own better; it was never found on the great plains. The huge grisly ranges from the great plains to the Pacific. The little peccary or Mexican wild hog merely crosses our southern border.

The finest hunting ground in America was, and indeed is, the mountainous region of western Montana and northwestern Wyoming.

In this high, cold land, of lofty mountains, deep forests, and open prairies, with its beautiful lakes and rapid rivers, all the species of big game mentioned above, except the peccary and Columbian blacktail, are to be found. Until 1880 they were very abundant, and they are still, with the exception of the bison, fairly plentiful. On most of the long hunting expeditions which I made away from my ranch, I went into this region.

The bulk of my hunting has been done in the cattle country, near my ranch on the Little Missouri, and in the adjoining lands round the lower Powder and Yellowstone. Until 1881 the valley of the Little Missouri was fairly thronged with game, and was absolutely unchanged in any respect from its original condition of primeval wildness. With the incoming of the stockmen all this changed, and the game was wofully slaughtered; but plenty of deer and antelope, a few sheep and bear, and an occasional elk are still left.

Since the professional hunters have vanished with the vast herds of game on which they preyed, the life of the ranchman is that which yields most chance of hunting. Life on a cattle ranch, on the great plains or among the foothills of the high mountains, has a peculiar attraction for those hardy, adventurous spirits who take most kindly to a vigorous out-of-door existence, and who are therefore most apt to care passionately for the chase of big game. The free ranchman lives in a wild, lonely country, and exactly as he breaks and tames his own horses, and guards and tends his own branded herds, so he takes

the keenest enjoyment in the chase, which is to him not merely the pleasantest of sports, but also a means of adding materially to his comforts, and often his only method of providing himself with fresh meat.

Hunting in the wilderness is of all pastimes the most attractive, and it is doubly so when not carried on merely as a pastime. Shooting over a private game preserve is of course in no way to be compared to it. The wilderness hunter must not only show skill in the use of the rifle and address in finding and approaching game, but he must also show the qualities of hardihood, self-reliance, and resolution needed for effectively grappling with his wild surroundings. The fact that the hunter needs the game, both for its meat and for its hide, undoubtedly adds a zest to the pursuit. Among the hunts which I have most enjoyed were those made when I was engaged in getting in the winter's stock of meat for the ranch, or was keeping some party of cowboys supplied with game from day to day.

CHAPTER II.

HUNTING FROM THE RANCH; THE BLACKTAIL DEER.

NO life can be pleasanter than life during the months of fall on a ranch in the northern cattle country. The weather is cool; in the evenings and on the rare rainy days we are glad to sit by the great fireplace, with its roaring cottonwood logs. But on most days not a cloud dims the serene splendor of the sky; and the fresh pure air is clear with the wonderful clearness of the high plains. We are in the saddle from morning to night.

The long, low, roomy ranch house, of clean hewed logs, is as comfortable as it is bare and plain. We fare simply but well; for the wife of my foreman makes excellent bread and cake, and there are plenty of potatoes, grown in the forlorn little garden-patch on the bottom. We also have jellies and jams, made from wild plums and buffalo berries; and all the milk we can drink. For meat we depend on our rifles; and, with an occasional interlude of ducks or prairie chickens, the mainstay of each meal is venison, roasted, broiled, or fried.

Sometimes we shoot the deer when we happen on them while about our ordinary business, —indeed throughout the time that I have lived

on the ranch, very many of the deer and antelope I killed were thus obtained. Of course while doing the actual round-up work it is impossible to attend to anything else; but we generally carry rifles while riding after the saddle band in the early morning, while visiting the line camps, or while in the saddle among the cattle on the range; and get many a shot in this fashion.

In the fall of 1890 some friends came to my ranch; and one day we took them to see a round-up. The OX, a Texan steer-outfit, had sent a couple of wagons to work down the river, after beef cattle, and one of my men had gone along to gather any of my own scattered steers that were ready for shipping, and to brand the late calves. There were perhaps a dozen riders with the wagons; and they were camped for the day on a big bottom where Blacktail and Whitetail creeks open into the river, several miles below my ranch.

At dawn one of the men rode off to bring in the saddle band. The rest of us were up by sunrise; and as we stood on the verandah under the shimmering cottonwood trees, revelling in the blue of the cloudless sky, and drinking in the cool air before going to breakfast, we saw the motley-colored string of ponies file down from the opposite bank of the river, and splash across the broad, shallow ford in front of the ranch house. Cantering and trotting the band swept towards the high, round horse-corral, in the open glade to the rear of the house. Guided by the jutting wing which stuck out at right angles, they entered the open gate, which was promptly

closed by the cowboy who had driven them in.

After breakfast we strolled over to the corral, with our lariats, and, standing by the snubbing-post in the middle, roped the horses we wished for the party—some that were gentle, and others that were not. Then every man saddled his horse; and at the moment of mounting for the start there was, as always, a thrill of mild excitement, each rider hoping that his own horse would not buck, and that his neighbor's would. I had no young horses on the ranch at the time; but a number of the older ones still possessed some of the least amiable traits of their youth.

Once in the saddle we rode off down river, along the bottoms, crossing the stream again and again. We went in Indian file, as is necessary among the trees and in broken ground, following the cattle-trails—which themselves had replaced or broadened the game paths that alone crossed the plateaus and bottoms when my ranch house was first built. Now we crossed open reaches of coarse grass, thinly sprinkled with large, brittle cotton-wood trees, their branches torn and splintered; now we wound our way through a dense jungle where the gray, thorny buffalo bushes, spangled with brilliant red berry clusters, choked the spaces between the thick-growing box-alders; and again the sure-footed ponies scrambled down one cut bank and up another, through seemingly impossible rifts, or with gingerly footsteps trod a path which cut the side of a butte or overhung a bluff. Sometimes we racked, or shacked along at the fox

trot which is the cow-pony's ordinary gait; and sometimes we loped or galloped and ran.

At last we came to the ford beyond which the riders of the round-up had made their camp. In the bygone days of the elk and buffalo, when our branded cattle were first driven thus far north, this ford had been dangerous from quicksand; but the cattle, ever crossing and re-crossing, had trodden down and settled the sand, and had found out the firm places; so that it was now easy to get over.

Close beyond the trees on the farther bank stood the two round-up wagons; near by was the cook's fire, in a trench, so that it might not spread; the bedding of the riders and horse-wranglers lay scattered about, each roll of blankets wrapped and corded in a stout canvas sheet. The cook was busy about the fire; the night-wrangler was snatching an hour or two's sleep under one of the wagons. Half a mile away, on the plain of sage brush and long grass, the day-wrangler was guarding the grazing or resting horse herd, of over a hundred head. Still farther distant, at the mouth of a ravine, was the day-herd of cattle, two or three cowboys watching it as they lolled drowsily in their saddles. The other riders were off on circles to bring in cattle to the round-up; they were expected every moment.

With the ready hospitality always shown in a cow-camp we were pressed to alight and take dinner, or at least a lunch; and accordingly we jumped off our horses and sat down. Our tin plates were soon heaped with fresh beef, bread, tomatoes, rice, and potatoes, all

very good; for the tall, bearded, scrawny cook knew his work, and the OX outfit always fed its men well,—and saw that they worked well too.

Before noon the circle riders began to appear on the plain, coming out of the ravines, and scrambling down the steep hills, singly or in twos and threes. They herded before them bunches of cattle, of varying size; these were driven together and left in charge of a couple of cow-punchers. The other men rode to the wagon to get a hasty dinner—lithe, sinewy fellows, with weather-roughened faces and fearless eyes; their broad felt hats flapped as they galloped, and their spurs and bridle chains jingled. They rode well, with long stirrups, sitting straight in the deep stock saddles, and their wiry ponies showed no signs of fatigue from the long morning's ride.

The horse-wrangler soon drove the saddle band to the wagons, where it was caught in a quickly improvised rope-corral. The men roped fresh horses, fitted for the cutting-work round the herd, with its attendant furious galloping and flash-like turning and twisting. In a few minutes all were in the saddle again and riding towards the cattle.

Then began that scene of excitement and turmoil, and seeming confusion, but real method and orderliness, so familiar to all who have engaged in stock-growing on the great plains. The riders gathered in a wide ring round the herd of uneasy cattle, and a couple of men rode into their midst to cut out the beef steers and the cows that were followed by unbranded calves. As soon as the ani-

mal was picked out the cowboy began to drive it slowly towards the outside of the herd, and when it was near the edge he suddenly raced it into the open. The beast would then start at full speed and try to double back among its fellows; while the trained cow-pony followed like a shadow, heading it off at every turn. The riders round that part of the herd opened out and the chosen animal was speedily hurried off to some spot a few hundred yards distant, where it was left under charge of another cowboy. The latter at first had his hands full in preventing his charge from rejoining the herd; for cattle dread nothing so much as being separated from their comrades. However, as soon as two or three others were driven out, enough to form a little bunch, it became a much easier matter to hold the "cut" as it is called. The cows and calves were put in one place, the beeves in another; the latter were afterwards run into the day-herd.

Meanwhile from time to time some clean-limbed young steer or heifer, able to run like an antelope and double like a jack-rabbit, tried to break out of the herd that was being worked, when the nearest cowboy hurried in pursuit at top speed and brought it back, after a headlong, break-neck race, in which no heed was paid to brush, fallen timber, prairie-dog holes, or cut banks. The dust rose in little whirling clouds, and through it dashed bolting cattle and galloping cowboys, hither and thither, while the air was filled with the shouts and laughter of the men, and the bellowing of the herd.

As soon as the herd was worked it was turned loose, while the cows and calves were driven over to a large corral, where the branding was done. A fire was speedily kindled, and in it were laid the branding irons of the different outfits represented on the round-up. Then two of the best ropers rode into the corral and began to rope the calves, round the hind legs by preference, but sometimes round the head. The other men dismounted to "wrestle" and brand them. Once roped, the calf, bawling and struggling, was swiftly dragged near the fire, where one or two of the calf-wrestlers grappled with and threw the kicking, plunging little beast, and held it while it was branded. If the calf was large the wrestlers, had hard work; and one or two young maverick bulls—that is, unbranded yearling bulls, which had been passed by in the round-ups of the preceding year—fought viciously, bellowing, and charging, and driving some of the men up the sides of the corral, to the boisterous delight of the others.

After watching the work for a little while we left and rode homewards. Instead of going along the river bottoms we struck back over the buttes. From time to time we came out on some sharp bluff overlooking the river. From these points of vantage we could see for several miles up and down the valley of the Little Missouri. The level bottoms were walled in by rows of sheer cliffs, and steep, grassy slopes. These bluff lines were from a quarter of a mile to a mile apart; they did not run straight, but in a succession of curves, so as to look like the halves of many

amphitheatres. Between them the river swept in great bends from side to side; the wide bed, brimful during the time of freshets, now held but a thin stream of water. Some of the bottoms were covered only with grass and sage brush; others with a dense jungle of trees; while yet others looked like parks, the cottonwoods growing in curved lines or in clumps scattered here and there.

On our way we came across a bunch of cattle, among which the sharp eyes of my foreman detected a maverick two-year-old heifer. He and one of the cowboys at once got down their ropes and rode after her; the rest of us first rounding up the bunch so as to give a fair start. After a sharp run one of the men, swinging his lariat round his head, got close up; in a second or two the noose settled round the heifer's neck, and as it became taut she was brought to with a jerk; immediately afterwards the other man made his throw and cleverly heeled her. In a trice the red heifer was stretched helpless on the ground, the two fierce little ponies, a pinto and a buckskin, keeping her down on their own account, tossing their heads and backing so that the ropes which led from the saddle-horns to her head and hind feet never slackened. Then we kindled a fire; one of the cinch rings was taken off to serve as a branding iron, and the heifer speedily became our property—for she was on our range.

When we reached the ranch it was still early, and after finishing dinner it lacked over an hour of sundown. Accordingly we went for another ride; and I carried my rifle.

We started up a winding coulie which opened back of the ranch house ; and after half an hour's canter clambered up the steep head-ravines, and emerged on a high ridge which went westward, straight as an arrow, to the main divide between the Little Missouri and the Big Beaver. Along this narrow, grassy crest we loped and galloped ; we were so high that we could look far and wide over all the country round about. To the southward, across a dozen leagues of rolling and broken prairie, loomed Sentinel Butte, the chief landmark of all that region. Behind us, beyond the river, rose the weird chaos of Bad Lands which at this point lie for many miles east of the Little Missouri. Their fantastic outlines were marked against the sky as sharply as if cut with a knife ; their grim and forbidding desolation warmed into wonderful beauty by the light of the dying sun. On our right, as we loped onwards, the land sunk away in smooth green-clad slopes and valleys ; on our left it fell in sheer walls. Ahead of us the sun was sinking behind a mass of blood-red clouds ; and on either hand the flushed skies were changing th ir tint to a hundred hues of opal and amethyst. Our tireless little horses sprang under us, thrilling with life ; we were riding through a fairy world of beauty and color and limitless space and freedom.

Suddenly a short hundred yards in front three blacktail leaped out of a little glen and crossed our path, with the peculiar bounding gait of their kind. At once I sprang from my horse and, kneeling, fired at the last and largest of the three. My bullet sped too far back,

but struck near the hip, and the crippled deer went slowly down a ravine. Running over a hillock to cut it off, I found it in some brush a few hundred yards beyond and finished it with a second ball. Quickly dressing it, I packed it on my horse, and trotted back leading him; an hour afterwards we saw through the waning light the quaint, home-like outlines of the ranch house.

After all, however, blacktail can only at times be picked up by chance in this way. More often it is needful to kill them by fair still-hunting, among the hills or wooded mountains where they delight to dwell. If hunted they speedily become wary. By choice they live in such broken country that it is difficult to pursue them with hounds; and they are by no means such water-loving animals as whitetail. On the other hand, the land in which they dwell is very favorable to the still-hunter who does not rely merely on stealth, but who can walk and shoot well. They do not go on the open prairie, and, if possible, they avoid deep forests, while, being good climbers, they like hills. In the mountains, therefore, they keep to what is called park country, where glades alternate with open groves. On the great plains they avoid both the heavily timbered river bottoms and the vast treeless stretches of level or rolling grass land; their chosen abode being the broken and hilly region, scantily wooded, which skirts almost every plains river and forms a belt, sometimes very narrow, sometimes many miles in breadth, between the alluvial bottom land and the prairies beyond. In these Bad Lands dwarfed pines and cedars

grow in the canyon-like ravines and among the high steep hills; there are also basins and winding coulies, filled with brush and shrubbery and small elm or ash. In all such places the blacktail loves to make its home.

I have not often hunted blacktail in the mountains, because while there I was generally after larger game; but round my ranch I have killed more of them than of any other game, and for me their chase has always possessed a peculiar charm. We hunt them in the loveliest season of the year, the fall and early winter, when it is keen pleasure merely to live out-of-doors. Sometimes we make a regular trip, of several days' duration, taking the ranch wagon, with or without a tent, to some rugged and little disturbed spot where the deer are plenty; perhaps returning with eight or ten carcasses, or even more—enough to last a long while in cold weather. We often make such trips while laying in our winter supply of meat.

At other times we hunt directly from the ranch house. We catch our horses overnight, and are in the saddle for an all-day's hunt long before the first streak of dawn, possibly not returning until some hours after nightfall The early morning and late evening are the best time for hunting game, except in regions where it is hardly ever molested, and where in consequence it moves about more or less throughout the day.

During the rut, which begins in September, the deer are in constant motion, and are often found in bands. The necks of the bucks swell and their sides grow gaunt; they chase

the does all night, and their flesh becomes strong and stringy—far inferior to that of the barren does and yearlings. The old bucks then wage desperate conflicts with one another, and bully their smaller brethren unmercifully. Unlike the elk, the blacktail, like the whitetail, are generally silent in the rutting season. They occasionally grunt when fighting; and once, on a fall evening, I heard two young bucks barking in a ravine back of my ranch house, and crept up and shot them; but this was a wholly exceptional instance.

At this time I hunt on foot, only using the horse to carry me to and from the hunting-ground; for while rutting, the deer, being restless, do not try to escape observation by lying still, and on the other hand are apt to wander about and so are easily seen from a distance. When I have reached a favorable place I picket my horse and go from vantage point to vantage point, carefully scanning the hillsides, ravines, and brush coulies from every spot that affords a wide outlook. The quarry once seen it may be a matter of hours, or only of minutes, to approach it, accordingly as the wind and cover are or are not favorable. The walks for many miles over the hills, the exercise of constant watchfulness, the excitement of the actual stalk, and the still greater excitement of the shot, combine to make still-hunting the blacktail, in the sharp fall weather, one of the most attractive of hardy outdoor sports. Then after the long, stumbling walk homewards, through the cool gloom of the late evening, comes the meal of smoking venison and milk and bread, and the sleepy rest, lying

on the bear-skins, or sitting in the rocking chair before the roaring fire, while the icy wind moans outside.

Earlier in the season, while the does are still nursing the fawns, and until the bucks have cleaned the last vestiges of velvet from their antlers, the deer lie very close, and wander round as little as may be. In the spring and early summer, in the ranch country, we hunt big game very little, and then only antelope; because in hunting antelope there is no danger of killing aught but bucks. About the first of August we begin to hunt blacktail, but do not kill does until a month later—and then only when short of meat. In the early weeks of the deer season we frequently do even the actual hunting on horseback instead of on foot; because the deer at this time rarely appear in view, so as to afford chance for a stalk, and yet are reluctant to break cover until very closely approached. In consequence we keep on our horses, and so get over much more ground than on foot, beating through or beside all likely looking cover, with the object of jumping the deer close by. Under such circumstances bucks sometimes lie until almost trodden on.

One afternoon in mid-August, when the ranch was entirely out of meat, I started with one of my cow-hands, Merrifield, to kill a deer. We were on a couple of stout, quiet ponies, accustomed to firing and to packing game. After riding a mile or two down the bottoms we left the river and struck off up a winding valley, which led back among the hills. In a short while we were in a blacktail coun-

try, and began to keep a sharp lookout for game, riding parallel to, but some little distance from, one another. The sun, beating down through the clear air, was very hot; the brown slopes of short grass, and still more the white clay walls of the Bad Lands, threw the heat rays in our faces. We skirted closely all likely-looking spots, such as the heavy brush-patches in the bottoms of the winding valleys, and the groves of ash and elm in the basins and pockets flanking the high plateaus; sometimes we followed a cattle trail which ran down the middle of a big washout, and again we rode along the brink of a deep cedar canyon. After a while we came to a coulie with a small muddy pool at its mouth; and round this pool there was much fresh deer sign. The coulie was but half a mile long, heading into and flanked by the spurs of some steep, bare hills. Its bottom, which was fifty yards or so across, was choked by a dense growth of brush, chiefly thorny bullberries, while the sides were formed by cut banks twelve or fifteen feet high. My companion rode up the middle, while I scrambled up one of the banks, and, dismounting, led my horse along its edge, that I might have a clear shot at whatever we roused. We went nearly to the head, and then the cowboy reined up and shouted to me that he "guessed there were no deer in the coulie." Instantly there was a smashing in the young trees midway between us, and I caught a glimpse of a blacktail buck speeding round a shoulder of the cut bank: and though I took a hurried shot I missed. However,

another buck promptly jumped up from the same place; evidently the two had lain secure in their day-beds, shielded by the dense cover, while the cowboy rode by them, and had only risen when he halted and began to call to me across them. This second buck, a fine fellow with big antlers not yet clear of velvet, luckily ran up the opposite bank and I got a fair shot at him as he galloped broadside to me along the open hillside. When I fired he rolled over with a broken back. As we came up he bleated loudly, an unusual thing for a buck to do.

Now these two bucks must have heard us coming, but reckoned on our passing them by without seeing them; which we would have done had they not been startled when the cowboy halted and spoke. Later in the season they would probably not have let us approach them, but would have run as soon as they knew of our presence. Of course, however, even later in the season, a man may by chance stumble across a deer close by. I remember one occasion when my ranch partner, Robert Munro Ferguson, and I almost corralled an unlucky deer in a small washout.

It was October, and our meat supply unexpectedly gave out; on our ranch, as on most ranches, an occasional meat famine of three or four days intervenes between the periods of plenty. So Ferguson and I started together, to get venison; and at the end of two days' hard work, leaving the ranch by sunrise, riding to the hunting grounds and tramping steadily until dark, we succeeded.

The weather was stormy and there were continual gusts of wind and of cold rain, sleet, or snow. We hunted through a large tract of rough and broken country, six or eight miles from the ranch. As often happens in such wild weather the deer were wild too; they were watchful and were on the move all the time. We saw a number, but either they ran off before we could get a shot, or if we did fire it was at such a distance or under such unfavorable circumstances that we missed. At last, as we were plodding drearily up a bare valley, the sodden mud caking round our shoes, we roused three deer from the mouth of a short washout but a few paces from us. Two bounded off; the third by mistake rushed into the washout, where he found himself in a regular trap and was promptly shot by my companion. We slung the carcass on a pole and carried it down to where we had left the horses; and then we loped homewards, bending to the cold slanting rain.

Although in places where it is much persecuted the blacktail is a shy and wary beast, the successful pursuit of which taxes to the uttermost the skill and energy of the hunter, yet, like the elk, if little molested it often shows astonishing tameness and even stupidity. In the Rockies I have sometimes come on blacktail within a very short distance, which would merely stare at me, then trot off a few yards, turn and stare again, and wait for several minutes before really taking alarm. What is much more extraordinary I have had the same thing happen to me in certain little hunted localities in the neighborhood of my

ranch, even of recent years. In the fall of 1890 I was riding down a canyon-coulie with my foreman, Sylvane Ferris, and a young friend from Boston, when we almost rode over a barren blacktail doe. She only ran some fifty yards, round a corner of the coulie, and then turned and stood until we ran forward and killed her—for we were in need of fresh meat. One October, a couple of years before this, my cousin, West Roosevelt, and I took a trip with the wagon to a very wild and rugged country, some twenty miles from the ranch. We found that the deer had evidently been but little disturbed. One day while scrambling down a steep, brushy hill, leading my horse, I came close on a doe and fawn; they merely looked at me with curiosity for some time, and then sauntered slowly off, remaining within shot for at least five minutes. Fortunately we had plenty of meat at the time, and there was no necessity to harm the graceful creatures. A few days later we came on two bucks sunning themselves in the bottom of a valley. My companion killed one. The other was lying but a dozen rods off; yet it never moved, until several shots had been fired at the first. It was directly under me and in my anxiety to avoid overshooting, to my horror I committed the opposite fault, and away went the buck.

Every now and then any one will make most unaccountable misses. A few days after thus losing the buck I spent nearly twenty cartridges in butchering an unfortunate yearling, and only killed it at all because it became so bewildered by the firing that it hardly

tried to escape. I never could tell why I used so many cartridges to such little purpose. During the next fortnight I killed seven deer without making a single miss, though some of the shots were rather difficult.

CHAPTER III.

THE WHITETAIL DEER; AND THE BLACKTAIL OF THE COLUMBIA.

THE whitetail deer is much the commonest game animal of the United States, being still found, though generally in greatly diminished numbers throughout most of the Union. It is a shrewd, wary, knowing beast; but it owes its prolonged stay in the land chiefly to the fact that it is an inveterate skulker, and fond of the thickest cover. Accordingly it usually has to be killed by stealth and stratagem, and not by fair, manly hunting; being quite easily slain in any one of half a dozen unsportsmanlike ways. In consequence I care less for its chase than for the chase of any other kind of American big game. Yet in the few places where it dwells in open, hilly forests and can be killed by still-hunting as if it were a blacktail; or better still, where the nature of the ground is such that it can be run down in fair chase on horseback, either with greyhounds, or with a pack of trackhounds, it yields splendid sport.

Killing a deer from a boat while the poor animal is swimming in the water, or on snowshoes as it flounders helplessly in the deep drifts, can only be justified on the plea of hunger. This is also true of lying in wait at

a lick. Whoever indulges in any of these methods save from necessity, is a butcher, pure and simple, and has no business in the company of true sportsmen.

Fire hunting may be placed in the same category; yet it is possibly allowable under exceptional circumstances to indulge in a fire hunt, if only for the sake of seeing the wilderness by torch-light. My first attempt at big-game shooting, when a boy, was "jacking" for deer in the Adirondacks, on a pond or small lake surrounded by the grand northern forests of birch and beech, pine, spruce, and fir. I killed a spike buck; and while I have never been willing to kill another in this manner, I cannot say that I regret having once had the experience. The ride over the glassy, black water, the witchcraft of such silent progress through the mystery of the night, cannot but impress one. There is pleasure in the mere buoyant gliding of the birch-bark canoe, with its curved bow and stern; nothing else that floats possesses such grace, such frail and delicate beauty, as this true craft of the wilderness, which is as much a creature of the wild woods as the deer and bear themselves. The light streaming from the bark lantern in the bow cuts a glaring lane through the gloom; in it all objects stand out like magic, shining for a moment white and ghastly and then vanishing into the impenetrable darkness; while all the time the paddler in the stern makes not so much as a ripple, and there is never a sound but the occasional splash of a muskrat, or the moaning *uloo-oo—uloo-uloo* of an owl from the deep forests; and

at last perchance the excitement of a shot at a buck, standing at gaze, with luminous eyeballs.

The most common method of killing the whitetail is by hounding; that is, by driving it with hounds past runways where hunters are stationed—for all wild animals when on the move prefer to follow certain definite routes. This is a legitimate, but inferior, kind of sport.

However, even killing driven deer may be good fun at certain times. Most of the whitetail we kill round the ranch are obtained in this fashion. On the Little Missouri—as throughout the plains country generally—these deer cling to the big wooded river bottoms, while the blacktail are found in the broken country back from the river. The tangled mass of cottonwoods, box-alders, and thorny bullberry bushes which cover the bottoms afford the deer a nearly secure shelter from the still-hunter; and it is only by the aid of hounds that they can be driven from their wooded fastnesses. They hold their own better than any other game. The great herds of buffalo, and the bands of elk, have vanished completely; the swarms of antelope and blacktail have been wofully thinned; but the whitetail, which were never found in such throngs as either buffalo or elk, blacktail or antelope, have suffered far less from the advent of the white hunters, ranchmen, and settlers. They are of course not as plentiful as formerly; but some are still to be found in almost all their old haunts. Where the river, winding between rows of high buttes, passes my ranch

house, there is a long succession of heavily wooded bottoms; and on all of these, even on the one whereon the house itself stands, there are a good many whitetail yet left.

When we take a day's regular hunt we usually wander afar, either to the hills after blacktail or to the open prairie after antelope. But if we are short of meat, and yet have no time for a regular hunt, being perhaps able to spare only a couple of hours after the day's work is over, then all hands turn out to drive a bottom for whitetail. We usually have one or two trackhounds at the ranch; true southern deerhounds, black and tan, with lop ears and hanging lips, their wrinkled faces stamped with an expression of almost ludicrous melancholy. They are not fast, and have none of the alert look of the pied and spotted modern foxhound; but their noses are very keen, their voices deep and mellow, and they are wonderfully staunch on a trail.

All is bustle and laughter as we start on such a hunt. The baying hounds bound about, as the rifles are taken down; the wiry ponies are roped out of the corral, and each broad-hatted hunter swings joyfully into the saddle. If the pony bucks or "acts mean" the rider finds that his rifle adds a new element of interest to the performance, which is of course hailed with loud delight by all the men on quiet horses. Then we splash off over the river, scramble across the faces of the bluffs, or canter along the winding cattle paths, through the woods, until we come to the bottom we intend to hunt. Here a hunter is stationed at each runway along which it is

deemed likely that the deer will pass; and one man, who has remained on horseback, starts into the cover with the hounds; occasionally this horseman himself, skilled, as most cowboys are, in the use of the revolver, gets a chance to kill a deer. The deep baying of the hounds speedily gives warning that the game is afoot; and the watching hunters, who have already hid their horses carefully, look to their rifles. Sometimes the deer comes far ahead of the dogs, running very swiftly with neck stretched straight out; and if the cover is thick such an animal is hard to hit. At other times, especially if the quarry is a young buck, it plays along not very far ahead of its baying pursuers, bounding and strutting with head up and white flag flaunting. If struck hard, down goes the flag at once, and the deer plunges into a staggering run, while the hounds yell with eager ferocity as they follow the bloody trail. Usually we do not have to drive more than one or two bottoms before getting a deer, which is forthwith packed behind one of the riders, as the distance is not great, and home we come in triumph. Sometimes, however, we fail to find game, or the deer take unguarded passes, or the shot is missed. Occasionally I have killed deer on these hunts; generally I have merely sat still a long while, listened to the hounds, and at last heard somebody else shoot. In fact such hunting, though good enough fun if only tried rarely, would speedily pall if followed at all regularly.

Personally the chief excitement I have had in connection therewith has arisen from some

antic of my horse; a half-broken bronco is apt to become unnerved when a man with a gun tries to climb on him in a hurry. On one hunt in 1890 I rode a wild animal named Whitefoot. He had been a confirmed and very bad bucker three years before, when I had him in my string on the round-up; but had grown quieter with years. Nevertheless I found he had some fire left; for a hasty vault into the saddle on my part, was followed on his by some very resolute pitching. I lost my rifle and hat, and my revolver and knife were bucked out of my belt; but I kept my seat all right, and finally got his head up and mastered him without letting him throw himself over backwards, a trick he sometimes practised. Nevertheless, in the first jump when I was taken unawares, I strained myself across the loins, and did not get entirely over it for six months.

To shoot running game with the rifle it is always necessary to be a good and quick marksman; for it is never easy to kill an animal, when in rapid motion, with a single bullet. If on a runway a man who is a fairly skilful rifleman, has plenty of time for a clear shot, on open ground, at comparatively short distance, say under eighty yards, and if the deer is cantering, he ought to hit; at least I generally do under such circumstances, by remembering to hold well forward, in fact just in front of the deer's chest. But I do not always kill by any means; quite often when I thought I held far enough ahead, my bullet has gone into the buck's hips or loins. However, one great feature

in the use of dogs is that they enable one almost always to recover wounded game.

If the animal is running at full speed a long distance off, the difficulty of hitting is of course very much increased; and if the country is open the value of a repeating rifle is then felt. If the game is bounding over logs or dodging through underbrush, the difficulty is again increased. Moreover, the natural gait of the different kinds of game must be taken into account. Of course the larger kinds, such as elk and moose, are the easiest to hit; then comes the antelope, in spite of its swiftness, and the sheep, because of the evenness of their running; then the whitetail, with its rolling gallop; and last and hardest of all, the blacktail, because of its extraordinary stiff-legged bounds.

Sometimes on a runway the difficulty is not that the game is too far, but that it is too close; for a deer may actually almost jump on the hunter, surprising him out of all accuracy of aim. Once something of the sort happened to me.

Winter was just beginning. I had been off with the ranch wagon on a last round-up of the beef steers; and had suffered a good deal, as one always does on these cold weather round-ups, sleeping out in the snow, wrapped up in blankets and tarpaulin, with no tent and generally no fire. Moreover, I became so weary of the interminable length of the nights, that I almost ceased to mind the freezing misery of standing night guard round the restless cattle; while roping, saddling, and mastering the rough horses

each morning, with numbed and stiffened limbs, though warming to the blood was harrowing to the temper.

On my return to the ranch I found a strange hunter staying there; a clean, square-built, honest-looking little fellow, but evidently not a native American. As a rule, nobody displays much curiosity about any one's else antecedents in the Far West; but I happened to ask my foreman who the newcomer was,—chiefly because the said newcomer, evidently appreciating the warmth and comfort of the clean, roomy, ranch house, with its roaring fires, books, and good fare, seemed inclined to make a permanent stay, according to the custom of the country. My foreman, who had a large way of looking at questions of foreign ethnology and geography, responded with indifference: "Oh, he's a kind of a Dutchman; but he hates the other Dutch, mortal. He's from an island Germany took from France in the last war!" This seemed puzzling; but it turned out that the "island" in question was Alsace. Native Americans predominate among the dwellers in and on the borders of the wilderness, and in the wild country over which the great herds of the cattle-men roam; and they take the lead in every way. The sons of the Germans, Irish, and other European newcomers are usually quick to claim to be "straight United States," and to disavow all kinship with the fellow-countrymen of their fathers. Once, while with a hunter bearing a German name, we came by chance on a German hunting party from one of the eastern

cities. One of them remarked to my companion that he must be part German himself, to which he cheerfully answered: "Well, my father was a Dutchman, but my mother was a white woman! I'm pretty white myself!" whereat the Germans glowered at him gloomily.

As we were out of meat the Alsatian and one of the cowboys and I started down the river with a wagon. The first day in camp it rained hard, so that we could not hunt. Towards evening we grew tired of doing nothing, and as the rain had become a mere fine drizzle, we sallied out to drive one of the bottoms for whitetail. The cowboy and our one trackhound plunged into the young cottonwood, which grew thickly over the sandy bottom; while the little hunter and I took our stands on a cut bank, twenty feet high and half a mile long, which hedged in the trees from behind. Three or four game trails led up through steep, narrow clefts in this bank; and we tried to watch these. Soon I saw a deer in an opening below, headed towards one end of the bank, round which another game trail led; and I ran hard towards this end, where it turned into a knife-like ridge of clay. About fifty yards from the point there must have been some slight irregularities in the face of the bank, enough to give the deer a foothold; for as I ran along the animal suddenly bounced over the crest, so close that I could have hit it with my right hand. As I tried to pull up short and swing round, my feet slipped from under me in the wet clay, and down I went;

while the deer literally turned a terrified somersault backwards. I flung myself to the edge and missed a hurried shot as it raced back on its tracks. Then, wheeling, I saw the little hunter running towards me along the top of the cut bank, his face on a broad grin. He leaped over one of the narrow clefts, up which a game trail led; and hardly was he across before the frightened deer bolted up it, not three yards from his back. He did not turn, in spite of my shouting and handwaving, and the frightened deer, in the last stage of panic at finding itself again almost touching one of its foes, sped off across the grassy slopes like a quarter horse. When at last the hunter did turn, it was too late; and our long-range fusillade proved harmless. During the next two days I redeemed myself, killing four deer.

Coming back our wagon broke down, no unusual incident in ranch-land, where there is often no road, while the strain is great in hauling through quicksands, and up or across steep broken hills; it rarely makes much difference beyond the temporary delay, for plains-men and mountain-men are very handy and self-helpful. Besides, a mere break-down sinks into nothing compared to having the team play out; which is, of course, most apt to happen at the times when it insures hardship and suffering, as in the middle of a snowstorm, or when crossing a region with no water. However, the reinsmen of the plains must needs face many such accidents, not to speak of runaways, or having the wagon pitchpole over on to the team in dropping down too

steep a hillside. Once after a three days' rainstorm some of us tried to get the ranch wagon along a trail which led over the ridge of a gumbo or clay butte. The sticky stuff clogged our shoes, the horses' hoofs, and the wheels; and it was even more slippery than it was sticky. Finally we struck a sloping shoulder; with great struggling, pulling, pushing, and shouting, we reached the middle of it, and then, as one of my men remarked, "the whole darned outfit slid into the coulie."

These hunting trips after deer or antelope with the wagon usually take four or five days. I always ride some tried hunting horse; and the wagon itself when on such a hunt is apt to lead a chequered career, as half the time there is not the vestige of a trail to follow. Moreover we often make a hunt when the good horses are on the round-up, or otherwise employed, and we have to get together a scrub team of cripples or else of outlaws—vicious devils, only used from dire need. The best teamster for such a hunt that we ever had on the ranch was a weather-beaten old fellow known as "Old Man Tompkins." In the course of a long career as lumberman, plains teamster, buffalo hunter, and Indian fighter, he had passed several years as a Rocky Mountain stage driver; and a stage driver of the Rockies is of necessity a man of such skill and nerve that he fears no team and no country. No matter how wild the unbroken horses, Old Tompkins never asked help; and he hated to drive less than a four-in-hand. When he once had a grip on the reins, he let no one hold the horses' heads. All he wished was

an open plain for the rush at the beginning. The first plunge might take the wheelers' fore-feet over the cross-bars of the leaders, but he never stopped for that; on went the team, running, bounding, rearing, tumbling, while the wagon leaped behind, until gradually things straightened out of their own accord. I soon found, however, that I could not allow him to carry a rifle; for he was an inveterate game butcher. In the presence of game the old fellow became fairly wild with excitement, and forgot the years and rheumatism which had crippled him. Once, after a long and tiresome day's hunt, we were walking home together; he was carrying his boots in his hands, bemoaning the fact that his feet hurt him. Suddenly a whitetail jumped up; down dropped Old Tompkins' boots, and away he went like a college sprinter, entirely heedless of stones and cactus. By some indiscriminate firing at long range we dropped the deer; and as Old Tompkins cooled down he realized that his bare feet had paid full penalty for his dash.

One of these wagon trips I remember because I missed a fair running shot which I much desired to hit; and afterwards hit a very much more difficult shot about which I cared very little. Ferguson and I, with Sylvane and one or two others, had gone a day's journey down the river for a hunt. We went along the bottoms, crossing the stream every mile or so, with an occasional struggle through mud or quicksand, or up the steep, rotten banks. An old buffalo hunter drove the wagon, with a couple of shaggy, bandy-legged ponies; the rest of us jogged along in front

on horseback, picking out a trail through the bottoms and choosing the best crossing places. Some of the bottoms were grassy pastures; on others great, gnarled cottonwoods, with shivered branches stood in clumps; yet others were choked with a true forest growth. Late in the afternoon we went into camp, choosing a spot where the cottonwoods were young; their glossy leaves trembled and rustled unceasingly. We speedily picketed the horses —changing them about as they ate off the grass,—drew water, and hauled great logs in front of where we had pitched the tent, while the wagon stood nearby. Each man laid out his bed; the food and kitchen kit were taken from the wagon; supper was cooked and eaten; and we then lay round the camp-fire, gazing into it, or up at the brilliant stars, and listening to the wild, mournful wailing of the coyotes. They were very plentiful round this camp; before sunrise and after sundown they called unceasingly.

Next day I took a long tramp and climb after mountain sheep and missed a running shot at a fine ram, about a hundred yards off; or rather I hit him and followed his bloody trail a couple of miles, but failed to find him; whereat I returned to camp much cast down.

Early the following morning Sylvane and I started for another hunt, this time on horseback. The air was crisp and pleasant; the beams of the just-risen sun struck sharply on the umber-colored hills and white cliff walls guarding the river, bringing into high relief their strangely carved and channelled fronts. Below camp the river was little but a succes

sion of shallow pools strung along the broad sandy bed which in spring-time was filled from bank to bank with foaming muddy water. Two mallards sat in one of these pools; and I hit one with the rifle, so nearly missing that the ball scarcely ruffled a feather; yet in some way the shock told, for the bird after flying thirty yards dropped on the sand.

Then we left the river and our active ponies scrambled up a small canyon-like break in the bluffs. All day we rode among the hills; sometimes across rounded slopes, matted with short buffalo grass; sometimes over barren buttes of red or white clay, where only sage brush and cactus grew; or beside deep ravines, black with stunted cedar; or along beautiful winding coulies, where the grass grew rankly, and the thickets of ash and wild plum made brilliant splashes of red and yellow and tender green. Yet we saw nothing.

As evening grew on we rode riverwards; we slid down the steep bluff walls, and loped across a great bottom of sage brush and tall grass, our horses now and then leaping like cats over the trunks of dead cottonwoods. As we came to the brink of the cut bank which forms the hither boundary of the river in freshet time, we suddenly saw two deer, a doe and a well grown fawn—of course long out of the spotted coat. They were walking with heads down along the edge of a sand-bar, near a pool, on the farther side of the stream bed, over two hundred yards distant. They saw us at once, and turning, galloped away, with flags aloft, the pictures of springing, vigorous beauty. I jumped off my horse in an instant, knelt, and

covered the fawn. It was going straight away from me, running very evenly, and I drew a coarse sight at the tip of the white flag. As I pulled trigger down went the deer, the ball having gone into the back of its head. The distance was a good three hundred yards ; and while of course there was much more chance than skill in the shot I felt well pleased with it—though I could not help a regret that while making such a difficult shot at a mere whitetail I should have missed a much easier shot at a noble bighorn. Not only I, but all the camp, had a practical interest in my success; for we had no fresh meat, and a fat whitetail fawn, killed in October, yields the best of venison. So after dressing the deer I slung the carcass behind my saddle, and we rode swiftly back to camp through the dark; and that evening we feasted on the juicy roasted ribs.

The degree of tameness and unsuspiciousness shown by whitetail deer depends, of course, upon the amount of molestation to which they are exposed. Their times for sleeping, feeding, and coming to water vary from the same cause. Where they are little persecuted they feed long after sunrise and before sunset, and drink when the sun is high in the heavens, sometimes even at midday; they then show but little fear of man, and speedily become indifferent to the presence of deserted dwellings.

In the cattle country the ranch houses are often shut during the months of warm weather, when the round-ups succeed one another without intermission, as the calves must be

branded, the beeves gathered and shipped, long trips made to collect strayed animals, and the trail stock driven from the breeding to the fattening grounds. At that time all the men-folk may have to be away in the white-topped wagons, working among the horned herds, whether plodding along the trail, or wandering to and fro on the range. Late one summer, when my own house had been thus closed for many months, I rode thither with a friend to pass a week. The place already wore the look of having slipped away from the domain of man. The wild forces, barely thrust back beyond the threshold of our habitation, were prompt to spring across it to renewed possession the moment we withdrew. The rank grass grew tall in the yard, and on the sodded roofs of the stable and sheds; the weather-beaten log walls of the house itself were one in tint with the trunks of the gnarled cottonwoods by which it was shaded. Evidently the woodland creatures had come to regard the silent, deserted buildings as mere outgrowths of the wilderness, no more to be feared than the trees around them or the gray, strangely shaped buttes behind.

Lines of delicate, heart-shaped footprints in the muddy reaches of the half-dry river-bed showed where the deer came to water; and in the dusty cattle-trails among the ravines many round tracks betrayed the passing and repassing of timber wolves,—once or twice in the late evening we listened to their savage and melancholy howling. Cotton-tail rabbits burrowed under the verandah. Within doors

the bushy-tailed pack-rats had possession, and at night they held a perfect witches' sabbath in the garret and kitchen; while a little white-footed mouse, having dragged half the stuffing out of a mattress, had made thereof a big fluffy nest, entirely filling the oven.

Yet, in spite of the abundant sign of game, we at first suffered under one of those spells of ill-luck which at times befall all hunters, and for several days we could kill nothing, though we tried hard, being in need of fresh meat. The moon was full—each evening, sitting on the ranch verandah, or walking homeward, we watched it rise over the line of bluffs beyond the river—and the deer were feeding at night; moreover in such hot weather they lie very close, move as little as possible, and are most difficult to find. Twice we lay out from dusk until dawn, in spite of the mosquitoes, but saw nothing; and the chances we did get we failed to profit by.

One morning, instead of trudging out to hunt I stayed at home, and sat in a rocking-chair on the verandah reading, rocking, or just sitting still listening to the low rustling of the cottonwood branches overhead, and gazing across the river. Through the still, clear, hot air, the faces of the bluffs shone dazzling white; no shadow fell from the cloudless sky on the grassy slopes, or on the groves of timber; only the faraway cooing of a mourning dove broke the silence. Suddenly my attention was arrested by a slight splashing in the water; glancing up from my book I saw three deer, which had come out of the thick fringe of bushes and young trees across

the river, and were strolling along the sand-bars directly opposite me. Slipping stealthily into the house I picked up my rifle, and slipped back again. One of the deer was standing motionless, broadside to me; it was a long shot, two hundred and fifty yards, but I had a rest against a pillar of the verandah. I held true, and as the smoke cleared away the deer lay struggling on the sands.

As the whitetail is the most common and widely distributed of American game, so the Columbian blacktail has the most sharply limited geographical range; for it is confined to the northwest coast, where it is by far the most abundant deer. In antlers it is indistinguishable from the common blacktail of the Rockies and the great plains, and it has the regular blacktail gait, a succession of stiff-legged bounds on all four feet at once; but its tail is more like a whitetail's in shape, though black above. As regards methods of hunting, and the amount of sport yielded, it stands midway between its two brethren. It lives in a land of magnificent timber, where the trees tower far into the sky, the giants of their kind; and there are few more attractive sports than still-hunting on the mountains, among these forests of marvellous beauty and grandeur. There are many lakes among the mountains where it dwells, and as it cares more for water than the ordinary blacktail, it is comparatively easy for hounds to drive it into some pond where it can be killed at leisure. It is thus often killed by hounding.

The only one I ever killed was a fine young

buck. We had camped near a little pond, and as evening fell I strolled off towards it and sat down. Just after sunset the buck came out of the woods. For some moments he hesitated and then walked forward and stood by the edge of the water, about sixty yards from me. We were out of meat, so I held right behind his shoulder, and though he went off, his bounds were short and weak, and he fell before he reached the wood.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE CATTLE RANGES; THE PRONG-HORN ANTELOPE.

EARLY one June just after the close of the regular spring round-up, a couple of wagons, with a score of riders between them, were sent to work some hitherto untouched country, between the Little Missouri and the Yellowstone. I was to go as the representative of our own and of one or two neighboring brands; but as the round-up had halted near my ranch I determined to spend a day there, and then to join the wagons;—the appointed meeting-place being a cluster of red scoria buttes, some forty miles distant, where there was a spring of good water.

Most of my day at the ranch was spent in slumber; for I had been several weeks on the round-up, where nobody ever gets quite enough sleep. This is the only drawback to the work; otherwise it is pleasant and exciting, with just that slight touch of danger necessary to give it zest, and without the wearing fatigue of such labor as lumbering or mining. But there is never enough sleep, at least on the spring and mid-summer round-ups. The men are in the saddle from dawn until dusk, at the time when the days are longest on these great northern plains; and in addi-

tion there is the regular night guarding and now and then a furious storm or a stampede, when for twenty-four hours at a stretch the riders only dismount to change horses or snatch a mouthful of food.

I started in the bright sunrise, riding one horse and driving loose before me eight others, one carrying my bedding. They travelled strung out in single file. I kept them trotting and loping, for loose horses are easiest to handle when driven at some speed, and moreover the way was long. My rifle was slung under my thigh; the lariat was looped on the saddle-horn.

At first our trail led through winding coulies, and sharp grassy defiles; the air was wonderfully clear, the flowers were in bloom, the breath of the wind in my face was odorous and sweet. The patter and beat of the unshod hoofs, rising in half-rhythmic measure, frightened the scudding deer; but the yellow-breasted meadow larks, perched on the budding tops of the bushes, sang their rich full songs without heeding us as we went by.

When the sun was well on high and the heat of the day had begun we came to a dreary and barren plain, broken by rows of low clay buttes. The ground in places was whitened by alkali; elsewhere it was dull gray. Here there grew nothing save sparse tufts of coarse grass, and cactus, and sprawling sage brush. In the hot air all things seen afar danced and wavered. As I rode and gazed at the shimmering haze the vast desolation of the landscape bore on me, it seemed as if the unseen and unknown powers

of the wastes were moving by and marshalling their silent forces. No man save the wilderness dweller knows the strong melancholy fascination of these long rides through lonely lands.

At noon, that the horses might graze and drink, I halted where some box-alders grew by a pool in the bed of a half-dry creek; and shifted my saddle to a fresh beast. When we started again we came out on the rolling prairie, where the green sea of wind-rippled grass stretched limitless as far as the eye could reach. Little striped gophers scuttled away, or stood perfectly straight at the mouths of their burrows, looking like picket pins. Curlews clamored mournfully as they circled overhead. Prairie fowl swept off, clucking and calling, or strutted about with their sharp tails erect. Antelope were very plentiful, running like race-horses across the level, or uttering their queer, barking grunt as they stood at gaze, the white hairs on their rumps all on end, their neck bands of broken brown and white vivid in the sunlight. They were found singly or in small straggling parties; the master bucks had not yet begun to drive out the younger and weaker ones as later in the season, when each would gather into a herd as many does as his jealous strength could guard from rivals. The nursing does whose kids had come early were often found with the bands; the others kept apart. The kids were very conspicuous figures on the prairies, across which they scudded like jack rabbits, showing nearly as much speed and alertness as their parents;

only the very young sought safety by lying flat to escape notice.

The horses cantered and trotted steadily over the mat of buffalo grass, steering for the group of low scoria mounds which was my goal. In mid-afternoon I reached it. The two wagons were drawn up near the spring; under them lay the night-wranglers, asleep; nearby the teamster-cooks were busy about the evening meal. A little way off the two day-wranglers were watching the horse-herd; into which I speedily turned my own animals. The riders had already driven in the bunches of cattle; and were engaged in branding the calves, and turning loose the animals that were not needed, while the remainder were kept, forming the nucleus of the herd which was to accompany the wagon.

As soon as the work was over the men rode to the wagons; sinewy fellows, with tattered broad-brimmed hats and clanking spurs, some wearing leather shaps or leggings, others having their trousers tucked into their high-heeled top-boots, all with their flannel shirts and loose neckerchiefs dusty and sweaty. A few were indulging in rough, good-natured horse play, to an accompaniment of yelling mirth; most were grave and taciturn, greeting me with a silent nod or a "How I friend." A very talkative man, unless the acknowledged wit of the party, according to the somewhat florid frontier notion of wit, is always looked on with disfavor in a cow-camp. After supper, eaten in silent haste, we gathered round the embers of the small fires, and the conversation glanced fitfully over the threadbare sub-

jects common to all such camps; the antics of some particularly vicious bucking bronco, how the different brands of cattle were showing up, the smallness of the calf drop, the respective merits of rawhide lariats and grass ropes, and bits of rather startling and violent news concerning the fates of certain neighbors. Then one by one we began to turn in under our blankets.

Our wagon was to furnish the night guards for the cattle; and each of us had his gentlest horse tied ready to hand. The night guards went on duty two at a time for two-hour watches. By good luck my watch came last. My comrade was a happy-go-lucky young Texan who for some inscrutable reason was known as "Latigo Strap"; he had just come from the south with a big drove of trail cattle.

A few minutes before two one of the guards who had gone on duty at midnight rode into camp and wakened us by shaking our shoulders. Fumbling in the dark I speedily saddled my horse; Latigo had left his saddled, and he started ahead of me. One of the annoyances of night guarding, at least in thick weather, is the occasional difficulty of finding the herd after leaving camp, or in returning to camp after the watch is over; there are few things more exasperating than to be helplessly wandering about in the dark under such circumstances. However, on this occasion there was no such trouble; for it was a brilliant starlight night and the herd had been bedded down by a sugar-loaf butte which made a good landmark. As we reached the spot we could make out the loom of the cattle

lying close together on the level plain; and then the dim figure of a horseman rose vaguely from the darkness and moved by in silence; it was the other of the two midnight guards, on his way back to his broken slumber.

At once we began to ride slowly round the cattle in opposite directions. We were silent, for the night was clear, and the herd quiet, in wild weather, when the cattle are restless, the cowboys never cease calling and singing as they circle them, for the sounds seem to quiet the beasts.

For over an hour we steadily paced the endless round, saying nothing, with our great-coats buttoned, for the air is chill towards morning on the northern plains, even in summer. Then faint streaks of gray appeared in the east. Latigo Strap began to call merrily to the cattle. A coyote came sneaking over the butte nearby, and halted to yell and wail; afterwards he crossed the coulie and from the hillside opposite again shrieked in dismal crescendo. The dawn brightened rapidly, the little skylarks of the plains began to sing, soaring far overhead, while it was still much too dark to see them. Their song is not powerful, but it is so clear and fresh and long-continued that it always appeals to one very strongly; especially because it is most often heard in the rose-tinted air of the glorious mornings, while the listener sits in the saddle, looking across the endless sweep of the prairies.

As it grew lighter the cattle became restless, rising and stretching themselves, while we continued to ride round them.

"Then the bronc' began to pitch
And I began to ride;
He bucked me off a cut bank,
Hell! I nearly died!"

sang Latigo from the other side of the herd. A yell from the wagons told that the cook was summoning the sleeping cow-punchers to breakfast; we were soon able to distinguish their figures as they rolled out of their bedding, wrapped and corded it into bundles, and huddled sullenly round the little fires. The horse wranglers were driving in the saddle bands. All the cattle got on their feet and started feeding. In a few minutes the hasty breakfast at the wagons had evidently been despatched for we could see the men forming rope corrals into which the ponies were driven; then each men saddled, bridled, and mounted his horse, two or three of the half-broken beasts bucking, rearing, and plunging frantically in the vain effort to unseat their riders.

The two men who were first in the saddle relieved Latigo and myself, and we immediately galloped to camp, shifted our saddles to fresh animals, gulped down a cup or two of hot coffee, and some pork, beans, and bread, and rode to the spot where the others were gathered, lolling loosely in their saddles, and waiting for the round-up boss to assign them their tasks. We were the last, and as soon as we arrived the boss divided all into two parties for the morning work, or "circle riding," whereby the cattle were to be gathered for the round-up proper. Then, as the others started, he turned to me and remarked:

"We 've got enough hands to drive this open country without you; but we 're out of meat, and I don't want to kill a beef for such a small outfit; can't you shoot some antelope this morning? We 'll pitch camp by the big blasted cottonwood at the foot of the ash coulies, over yonder, below the breaks of Dry Creek."

Of course I gladly assented, and was speedily riding alone across the grassy slopes. There was no lack of the game I was after, for from every rise of ground I could see antelope scattered across the prairie, singly, in couples, or in bands. But their very numbers, joined to the lack of cover on such an open, flattish country, proved a bar to success; while I was stalking one band another was sure to see me and begin running, whereat the first would likewise start; I missed one or two very long shots, and noon found me still without game.

However, I was then lucky enough to see a band of a dozen feeding to windward of a small butte, and by galloping in a long circle I got within a quarter of a mile of them before having to dismount. The stalk itself was almost too easy; for I simply walked to the butte, climbed carefully up a slope where the soil was firm, and peered over the top to see the herd, a little one, a hundred yards off. They saw me at once and ran, but I held well ahead of a fine young prong-buck, and rolled him over like a rabbit, with both shoulders broken. In a few minutes I was riding onwards once more with the buck lashed behind my saddle.

The next one I got, a couple of hours later,

offered a much more puzzling stalk. He was a big fellow in company with four does or small bucks. All five were lying in the middle of a slight basin, at the head of a gentle valley. At first sight it seemed impossible to get near them, for there was not so much cover as a sage brush, and the smooth, shallow basin in which they lay was over a thousand yards across, while they were looking directly down the valley. However, it is curious how hard it is to tell, even from nearby, whether a stalk can or cannot be made; the difficulty being to estimate the exact amount of shelter yielded by little inequalities of ground. In this instance a small shallow watercourse, entirely dry, ran along the valley, and after much study I decided to try to crawl up it, although the big bulging telescopic eyes of the prong-buck—which have much keener sight than deer or any other game—would in such case be pointed directly my way.

Having made up my mind I backed cautiously down from the coign of vantage whence I had first seen the game, and ran about a mile to the mouth of a washout which formed the continuation of the watercourse in question. Protected by the high clay banks of this washout I was able to walk upright until within half a mile of the prong-bucks, then my progress became very tedious and toilsome, as I had to work my way up the watercourse flat on my stomach, dragging the rifle beside me. At last I reached a spot beyond which not even a snake could crawl unnoticed. In front was a low bank, a couple

of feet high, crested with tufts of coarse grass. Raising my head very cautiously I peered through these and saw the prong-horn about a hundred and fifty yards distant. At the same time I found that I had crawled to the edge of a village of prairie dogs, which had already made me aware of their presence by their shrill yelping. They saw me at once, and all those away from their homes scuttled towards them, and dived down the burrows, or sat on the mounds at the entrances, scolding convulsively and jerking their fat little bodies and short tails. This commotion at once attracted the attention of the antelope. They rose forthwith, and immediately caught a glimpse of the black muzzle of the rifle which I was gently pushing through the grass tufts. The fatal curiosity which so often in this species offsets wariness and sharp sight, proved my friend, evidently the antelope could not quite make me out and wished to know what I was. They moved nervously to and fro, striking the earth with their fore hoofs, and now and then uttering a sudden bleat. At last the big buck stood still broadside to me, and I fired. He went off with the others, but lagged behind as they passed over the hill crest, and when I reached it I saw him standing, not very far off, with his head down. Then he walked backwards a few steps, fell over on his side, and died.

As he was a big buck I slung him across the saddle, and started for camp afoot, leading the horse. However my hunt was not over, for while still a mile from the wagons, going down a coulie of Dry Creek, a yearling prong

buck walked over the divide to my right and stood still until I sent a bullet into its chest; so that I made my appearance in camp with three antelope.

I spoke above of the sweet singing of the western meadow lark and plains skylark; neither of them kin to the true skylark, by the way, one being a cousin of the grakles and hang-birds, and the other a kind of pipit. To me both of these birds are among the most attractive singers to which I have ever listened, but with all bird-music much must be allowed for the surroundings and much for the mood, and the keenness of sense, of the listener. The lilt of the little plains skylark is neither very powerful nor very melodious; but it is sweet, pure, long-sustained, with a ring of courage befitting a song uttered in highest air.

The meadow lark is a singer of a higher order, deserving to rank with the best. Its song has length, variety, power and rich melody; and there is in it sometimes a cadence of wild sadness, inexpressibly touching. Yet I cannot say that either song would appeal to others as it appeals to me for to me it comes forever laden with a hundred memories and associations; with the sight of dim hills reddening in the dawn, with the breath of cool morning winds blowing across lonely plains, with the scent of flowers on the sunlit prairie, with the motion of fiery horses, with all the strong thrill of eager and buoyant life. I doubt if any man can judge dispassionately the bird songs of his own country; he cannot disassociate them from

the sights and sounds of the land that is so dear to him.

This is not a feeling to regret, but it must be taken into account in accepting any estimate of bird music—even in considering the reputation of the European skylark and nightingale. To both of these birds I have often listened in their own homes; always with pleasure and admiration, but always with a growing belief that relatively to some other birds they were ranked too high. They are pre-eminently birds with literary associations; most people take their opinions of them at second-hand, from the poets.

No one can help liking the lark; it is such a brave, honest, cheery bird, and moreover its song is uttered in the air, and is very long-sustained. But it is by no means a musician of the first rank. The nightingale is a performer of a very different and far higher order; yet though it is indeed a notable and admirable singer, it is an exaggeration to call it unequalled. In melody, and above all in that finer, higher melody where the chords vibrate with the touch of eternal sorrow, it cannot rank with such singers as the wood thrush and hermit thrush. The serene, ethereal beauty of the hermit's song, rising and falling through the still evening, under the archways of hoary mountain forests that have endured from time everlasting; the golden, leisurely chiming of the wood thrush, sounding on June afternoons, stanza by stanza, through sun-flecked groves of tall hickories, oaks, and chestnuts; with these there is nothing in the nightingale's song to

compare. But in volume and continuity, in tuneful, voluble, rapid outpouring and ardor, above all in skilful and intricate variation of theme, its song far surpasses that of either of the thrushes. In all these respects it is more just to compare it with the mocking-bird's, which, as a rule, likewise falls short precisely on those points where the songs of the two thrushes excel.

The mocking-bird is a singer that has suffered much in reputation from its powers of mimicry. On ordinary occasions, and especially in the daytime, it insists on playing the harlequin. But when free in its own favorite haunts at night in the love season it has a song, or rather songs, which are not only purely original, but are also more beautiful than any other bird music whatsoever. Once I listened to a mocking-bird singing the livelong spring night, under the full moon, in a magnolia tree; and I do not think I shall ever forget its song.

It was on the plantation of Major Campbell Brown, near Nashville, in the beautiful, fertile mid-Tennessee country. The mocking-birds were prime favorites on the place; and were given full scope for the development, not only of their bold friendliness towards mankind, but also of that marked individuality and originality of character in which they so far surpass every other bird as to become the most interesting of all feathered folk. One of the mockers, which lived in the hedge bordering the garden, was constantly engaged in an amusing feud with an honest old setter dog, the point of attack being the tip of the

dog's tail For some reason the bird seemed to regard any hoisting of the setter's tail as a challenge and insult. It would flutter near the dog as he walked; the old setter would become interested in something and raise his tail. The bird would promptly fly at it and peck the tip; whereupon down went the tail until in a couple of minutes the old fellow would forget himself, and the scene would be repeated. The dog usually bore the assaults with comic resignation; and the mocker easily avoided any momentary outburst of clumsy resentment.

On the evening in question the moon was full. My host kindly assigned me a room of which the windows opened on a great magnolia tree, where, I was told, a mocking-bird sang every night and all night long. I went to my room about ten. The moonlight was shining in through the open window, and the mocking-bird was already in the magnolia. The great tree was bathed in a flood of shining silver; I could see each twig, and mark every action of the singer, who was pouring forth such a rapture of ringing melody as I have never listened to before or since. Sometimes he would perch motionless for many minutes, his body quivering and thrilling with the outpour of music. Then he would drop softly from twig to twig, until the lowest limb was reached, when he would rise, fluttering and leaping through the branches, his song never ceasing for an instant, until he reached the summit of the tree and launched into the warm, scent-laden air, floating in spirals, with outspread wings, until, as if

spent, he sank gently back into the tree and down through the branches, while his song rose into an ecstasy of ardor and passion. His voice rang like a clarionet, in rich, full tones, and his execution covered the widest possible compass; theme followed theme, a torrent of music, a swelling tide of harmony, in which scarcely any two bars were alike. I stayed till midnight listening to him; he was singing when I went to sleep; he was still singing when I woke a couple of hours later; he sang through the livelong night.

There are many singers beside the meadow lark and little skylark in the plains country; that brown and desolate land, once the home of the thronging buffalo, still haunted by the bands of the prong-buck, and roamed over in ever increasing numbers by the branded herds of the ranchman. In the brush of the river bottoms there are the thrasher and song sparrow; on the grassy uplands the lark finch, vesper sparrow, and lark bunting; and in the rough canyons the rock wren, with its ringing melody.

Yet in certain moods a man cares less for even the loveliest bird songs than for the wilder, harsher, stronger sounds of the wilderness; the guttural booming and clucking of the prairie fowl and the great sage fowl in spring; the honking of gangs of wild geese, as they fly in rapid wedges; the bark of an eagle, wheeling in the shadow of storm-scarred cliffs; or the far-off clanging of many sandhill cranes, soaring high overhead in circles which cross and recross at an incredible altitude. Wilder yet, and stranger, are the

cries of the great four-footed beasts; the rhythmic pealing of a bull-elk's challenge; and that most sinister and mournful sound, ever fraught with foreboding of murder and rapine, the long-drawn baying of the gray wolf.

Indeed, save to the trained ear most mere bird songs are not very noticeable. The ordinary wilderness dweller, whether hunter orcowboy, scarcely heeds them; and in fact knows but little of the smaller birds. If a bird has some conspicuous peculiarity of look or habit he will notice its existence; but not otherwise. He knows a good deal about magpies, whiskey jacks, or water ousels; but nothing whatever concerning the thrushes, finches, and warblers.

It is the same with mammals. The prairie-dogs he cannot help noticing. With the big pack-rats also he is well acquainted; for they are handsome, with soft gray fur, large eyes, and bushy tails; and, moreover, no one can avoid remarking their extraordinary habit of carrying to their burrows everything bright, useless, and portable, from an empty cartridge case to a skinning knife. But he knows nothing of mice, shrews, pocket gophers, or weasels; and but little even of some larger mammals with very marked characteristics. Thus I have met but one or two plainsmen who knew anything of the curious plains ferret, that rather rare weasel-like animal, which plays the same part on the plains that the mink does by the edges of all our streams and brooks, and the tree-loving sable in the cold northern forests. The ferret makes its home in burrows, and by preference goes abroad at

dawn and dusk, but sometimes even at midday. It is as blood-thirsty as the mink itself, and its life is one long ramble for prey, gophers, prairie-dogs, sage rabbits, jack-rabbits, snakes, and every kind of ground bird furnishing its food. I have known one to fairly depopulate a prairie-dog town, it being the arch foe of these little rodents, because of its insatiable blood lust and its capacity to follow them into their burrows. Once I found the bloody body and broken eggs of a poor prairie-hen which a ferret had evidently surprised on her nest. Another time one of my men was eye-witness to a more remarkable instance of the little animal's blood-thirsty ferocity. He was riding the range, and being attracted by a slight commotion in a clump of grass, he turned his horse thither to look, and to his astonishment found an antelope fawn at the last gasp, but still feebly struggling, in the grasp of a ferret, which had throttled it and was sucking its blood with hideous greediness. He avenged the murdered innocent by a dexterous blow with the knotted end of his lariat.

That mighty bird of rapine, the war eagle, which on the great plains and among the Rockies supplants the bald-headed eagle of better-watered regions, is another dangerous foe of the young antelope. It is even said that under exceptional circumstances eagles will assail a full-grown prong-horn; and a neighboring ranchman informs me that he was once an eye-witness to such an attack. It was a bleak day in the late winter, and he was riding home across a wide dreary plateau,

when he saw two eagles worrying and pouncing on a prong-buck—seemingly a yearling. It made a gallant fight. The eagles hovered over it with spread wings, now and then swooping down, their talons out-thrust, to strike at the head, or to try to settle on the loins. The antelope reared and struck with hoofs and horns like a goat; but its strength was failing rapidly, and doubtless it would have succumbed in the end had not the approach of the ranchman driven off the marauders.

I have likewise heard stories of eagles attacking badgers, foxes, bob-cats, and coyotes; but I am inclined to think all such cases exceptional. I have never myself seen an eagle assail anything bigger than a fawn, lamb, kid, or jack-rabbit. It also swoops at geese, sage fowl, and prairie fowl. On one occasion while riding over the range I witnessed an attack on a jack rabbit. The eagle was soaring overhead, and espied the jack while the latter was crouched motionless. Instantly the great bird rushed down through the humming air, with closed wings; checked itself when some forty yards above the jack, hovered for a moment, and again fell like a bolt. Away went long-ears, running as only a frightened jack can; and after him the eagle, not with the arrowy rush of its descent from high air, but with eager, hurried flapping. In a short time it had nearly overtaken the fugitive, when the latter dodged sharply to one side, and the eagle overshot it precisely as a greyhound would have done, stopping itself by a powerful, setting motion of the great pinions.

Twice this manœuvre was repeated; then the eagle made a quick rush, caught and overthrew the quarry before it could turn, and in another moment was sitting triumphant on the quivering body, the crooked talons driven deep into the soft, furry sides.

Once while hunting mountain sheep in the Bad Lands I killed an eagle on the wing with the rifle. I was walking beneath a cliff of gray clay, when the eagle sailed into view over the crest. As soon as he saw me he threw his wings aback, and for a moment before wheeling poised motionless, offering a nearly stationary target; so that my bullet grazed his shoulder, and down he came through the air, tumbling over and over. As he struck the ground he threw himself on his back, and fought against his death with the undaunted courage proper to his brave and cruel nature.

Indians greatly prize the feathers of this eagle. With them they make their striking and beautiful war bonnets, and bedeck the manes and tails of their spirited war ponies. Every year the Grosventres and Mandans from the Big Missouri come to the neighborhood of my ranch to hunt. Though not good marksmen they kill many whitetail deer, driving the bottoms for them in bands, on horseback; and they catch many eagles. Sometimes they take these alive by exposing a bait near which a hole is dug, where one of them lies hidden for days, with Indian patience, until an eagle lights on the bait and is noosed.

Even eagles are far less dangerous enemies to antelope than are wolves and coyotes. These beasts are always prowling round the

bands to snap up the sick or unwary; and in spring they revel in carnage of the kids and fawns. They are not swift enough to overtake the grown animals by sheer speed; but they are superior in endurance, and especially in winter, often run them down in fair chase. A prong-buck is a plucky little beast, and when cornered it often makes a gallant, though not a very effectual, fight.

CHAPTER V.

HUNTING THE PRONG-BUCK; FROST, FIRE, AND THIRST.

AS with all other American game, man is a worse foe to the prong-horns than all their brute enemies combined. They hold their own much better than the bigger game; on the whole even better than the blacktail; but their numbers have been wofully thinned, and in many places they have been completely exterminated. The most exciting method of chasing them is on horseback with gray-hounds; but they are usually killed with the rifle. Owing to the open nature of the ground they frequent the shots must generally be taken at long range; hence this kind of hunting is pre-eminently that needing judgment of distance and skill in the use of the long-range rifle at stationary objects. On the other hand the antelope are easily seen, making no effort to escape observation, as deer do, and are so curious that in very wild districts to this day they can sometimes be tolled within rifle shot by the judicious waving of a red flag. In consequence, a good many very long, but tempting, shots can be obtained. More cartridges are used, relatively to the amount of game killed, on antelope, than in any other hunting.

Often I have killed prong-bucks while riding between the outlying line camps, which are usually stationed a dozen miles or so back from the river, where the Bad Lands melt into the prairie. In continually trying long shots, of course one occasionally makes a remarkable hit. Once I remember while riding down a broad, shallow coulie with two of my cow-hands—Seawell and Dow, both keen hunters and among the staunchest friends I have ever had—rousing a band of antelope which stood irresolute at about a hundred yards until I killed one. Then they dashed off, and I missed one shot, but with my next, to my own utter astonishment, killed the last of the band, a big buck, just as he topped a rise four hundred yards away. To offset such shots I have occasionally made an unaccountable miss. Once I was hunting with the same two men, on a rainy day, when we came on a bunch of antelope some seventy yards off, lying down in the side of a coulie, to escape the storm. They huddled together a moment to gaze, and, with stiffened fingers I took a shot, my yellow oilskin slicker flapping around me in the wind and rain. Down went one buck, and away went the others. One of my men walked up to the fallen beast, bent over it, and then asked, "Where did you aim?" Not reassured by the question, I answered doubtfully, "Behind the shoulder"; whereat he remarked drily, "Well, you hit it in the eye!" I never did know whether I killed the antelope I aimed at or another. Yet that same day I killed three more bucks at decidedly long shots; at the time we lacked

meat at the ranch, and were out to make a good killing.

Besides their brute and human foes, the prong-horn must also fear the elements, and especially the snows of winter. On the northern plains the cold weather is of polar severity, and turns the green, grassy prairies of midsummer into ironbound wastes. The blizzards whirl and sweep across them with a shrieking fury which few living things may face. The snow is like fine ice dust, and the white waves glide across the grass with a stealthy, crawling motion which has in it something sinister and cruel. Accordingly, as the bright fall weather passes, and the dreary winter draws nigh, when the days shorten, and the nights seem interminable, and gray storms lower above the gray horizon, the antelope gather in bands and seek sheltered places, where they may abide through the winter-time of famine and cold and deep snow, Some of these bands travel for many hundred miles, going and returning over the same routes, swimming rivers, crossing prairies, and threading their way through steep defiles. Such bands make their winter home in places like the Black Hills, or similar mountainous regions, where the shelter and feed are good, and where in consequence antelope have wintered in countless thousands for untold generations. Other bands do not travel for any very great distance, but seek some sheltered grassy tableland in the Bad Lands, or some well-shielded valley, where their instinct and experience teach them that the snow does not lie deep in winter. Once having chosen such a place

they stand much persecution before leaving it.

One December, an old hunter whom I knew told me that such a band was wintering a few miles from a camp where two line-riders of the W Bar brand were stationed; and I made up my mind to ride thither and kill a couple. The line camp was twenty miles from my ranch; the shack in which the old hunter lived was midway between, and I had to stop there to find out the exact lay of the land.

At dawn, before our early breakfast, I saddled a tough, shaggy sorrel horse; hastening in-doors as soon as the job was over, to warm my numbed fingers. After breakfast I started, muffled in my wolf-skin coat, with beaver-fur cap, gloves, and shaps, and great felt overshoes. The windless air was bitter cold, the thermometer showing well below zero. Snow lay on the ground, leaving bare patches here and there, but drifted deep in the hollows. Under the steel-blue heavens the atmosphere had a peculiar glint as if filled with myriads of tiny crystals. As I crossed the frozen river, immediately in front of the ranch house, the strangely carved tops of the bluffs were reddening palely in the winter sunrise. Prairie fowl were perched in the bare cottonwoods along the river brink, showing large in the leafless branches; they called and clucked to one another.

Where the ground was level and the snow not too deep I loped, and before noon I reached the sheltered coulie where, with long poles and bark, the hunter had built his tepee-wigwam, as eastern woodsmen would have

called it. It stood in a loose grove of elms and box-alders; from the branches of the nearest trees hung saddles of frozen venison. The smoke rising from the funnel-shaped top of the tepee showed that there was more fire than usual within; it is easy to keep a good tepee warm, though it is so smoky that no one therein can stand upright. As I drew rein the skin door was pushed aside, and the hard old face and dried, battered body of the hunter appeared. He greeted me with a surly nod, and a brief request to "light and hev somethin' to eat"—the invariable proffer of hospitality on the plains. He wore a greasy buckskin shirt or tunic, and an odd cap of badger skin, from beneath which strayed his tangled hair; age, rheumatism, and the many accidents and incredible fatigue, hardship, and exposure of his past life had crippled him, yet he still possessed great power of endurance, and in his seamed weather-scarred face his eyes burned fierce and piercing as a hawk's. Ever since early manhood he had wandered over the plains, hunting and trapping; he had waged savage private war against half the Indian tribes of the north; and he had wedded wives in each of the tribes of the other half. A few years before this time the great buffalo herds had vanished, and the once swarming beaver had shared the same fate; the innumerable horses and horned stock of the cattlemen, and the daring rough riders of the ranches, had supplanted alike the game and the red and white wanderers who had followed it with such fierce rivalry. When the change took place the old fellow,

with failing bodily powers, found his life-work over. He had little taste for the career of the desperado, horse-thief, highwayman, and man-killer, which not a few of the old buffalo hunters adopted when their legitimate occupation was gone; he scorned still more the life of vicious and idle semi-criminality led by others of his former companions who were of weaker mould. Yet he could not do regular work. His existence had been one of excitement, adventure, and restless roaming, when it was not passed in lazy ease; his times of toil and peril varied by fits of brutal revelry. He had no kin, no ties of any kind. He would accept no help, for his wants were very few, and he was utterly self-reliant. He got meat, clothing, and bedding from the antelope and deer he killed; the spare hides and venison he bartered for what little else he needed. So he built him his tepee in one of the most secluded parts of the Bad Lands, where he led the life of a solitary hunter, awaiting in grim loneliness the death which he knew to be near at hand.

I unsaddled and picketed my horse, and followed the old hunter into his smoky tepee; sat down on the pile of worn buffalo robes which formed his bedding, and waited in silence while he fried some deer meat, and boiled some coffee—he was out of flour. As I ate, he gradually unbent and talked quite freely, and before I left he told me exactly where to find the band, which he assured me was located for the winter, and would not leave unless much harried.

After a couple of hours' rest I again started,

and pushed out to the end of the Bad Lands. Here, as there had been no wind, I knew I should find in the snow the tracks of one of the riders from the line camp, whose beat lay along the edge of the prairie for some eight miles, until it met the beat of a rider from the line camp next above. As nightfall came on it grew even colder; long icicles hung from the lips of my horse; and I shivered slightly in my fur coat. I had reckoned the distance ill, and it was dusk when I struck the trail; but my horse at once turned along it of his own accord and began to lope. Half an hour later I saw through the dark what looked like a spark on the side of a hill. Toward this my horse turned; and in another moment a whinneying from in front showed I was near the camp. The light was shining through a small window, the camp itself being a dugout with a log roof and front—a kind of frontier building always warm in winter. After turning my horse into the rough log stable with the horses of the two cowboys, I joined the latter at supper inside the dugout; being received of course with hearty cordiality. After the intense cold outside the warmth within was almost oppressive, for the fire was roaring in the big stone fireplace. The bunks were broad; my two friends turned into one, and I was given the other, with plenty of bedding; so that my sleep was sound.

We had breakfasted and saddled our horses and were off by dawn next morning. My companions, muffled in furs, started in opposite directions to ride their lonely beats, while I steered for my hunting-ground. It

was a lowering and gloomy day; at sunrise pale, lurid sundogs hung in the glimmering mist; gusts of wind moaned through the ravines.

At last I reached a row of bleak hills, and from a ridge looked cautiously down on the chain of plateaus, where I had been told I should see the antelope. Sure enough, there they were, to the number of several hundred, scattered over the level snow-streaked surface of the nearest and largest plateau, greedily cropping the thick, short grass. Leaving my horse tied in a hollow I speedily stalked up a coulie to within a hundred yards of the nearest band and killed a good buck. Instantly all the antelope in sight ran together into a thick mass and raced away from me, until they went over the opposite edge of the plateau; but almost as soon as they did so they were stopped by deep drifts of powdered snow, and came back to the summit of the table-land. They then circled round the edge at a gallop, and finally broke madly by me, jostling one another in their frantic haste and crossed by a small ridge into the next plateau beyond; as they went by I shot a yearling.

I now had all the venison I wished, and would shoot no more, but I was curious to see how the antelope would act, and so walked after them. They ran about half a mile, and then the whole herd, of several hundred individuals, wheeled into line fronting me, like so many cavalry, and stood motionless, the white and brown bands on their necks looking like the facings on a uniform. As I walked near they again broke and rushed to the end of the

valley. Evidently they feared to leave the flats for the broken country beyond, where the rugged hills were riven by gorges, in some of which snow lay deep even thus early in the season. Accordingly, after galloping a couple of times round the valley, they once more broke by me, at short range, and tore back along the plateaus to that on which I had first found them. Their evident and extreme reluctance to venture into the broken country round about made me readily understand the tales I had heard of game butchers killing over a hundred individuals at a time out of a herd so situated.

I walked back to my game, dressed it, and lashed the saddles and hams behind me on my horse; I had chosen old Sorrel Joe for the trip because he was strong, tough, and quiet. Then I started for the ranch, keeping to the prairie as long as I could, because there the going was easier; sometimes I rode, sometimes I ran on foot leading Sorrel Joe.

Late in the afternoon, as I rode over a roll in the prairie I saw ahead of me a sight very unusual at that season; a small emigrant train going westward. There were three white-topped prairie schooners, containing the household goods, the tow-headed children, and the hard-faced, bony women; the tired horses were straining wearily in the traces; the bearded, moody men walked alongside They had been belated by sickness, and the others of their company had gone ahead to take up claims along the Yellowstone; now they themselves were pushing forward in order to reach the holdings of their friends

before the first deep snows stopped all travel. They had no time to halt; for there were still two or three miles to go that evening before they could find a sheltered resting-place with fuel, grass, and water. A little while after passing them I turned in the saddle and looked back. The lonely little train stood out sharply on the sky-line, the wagons looming black against the cold red west as they toiled steadily onward across the snowy plain.

Night soon fell; but I cared little, for I was on ground I knew. The old horse threaded his way at a lope along the familiar game trails and cattle paths; in a couple of hours I caught the gleam from the firelit windows of the ranch house. No man who, for his good-fortune, has at times in his life endured toil and hardship, ever fails to appreciate the strong elemental pleasures of rest after labor, food after hunger, warmth and shelter after bitter cold.

So much for the winter hunting. But in the fall, when the grass is dry as tinder, the antelope hunter, like other plainsmen, must sometimes face fire instead of frost. Fire is one of the most dreaded enemies of the ranchmen on the cattle ranges; and fighting a big prairie fire is a work of extraordinary labor, and sometimes of danger. The line of flame, especially when seen at night, undulating like a serpent, is very beautiful; though it lacks the terror and grandeur of the great forest fires.

One October, Ferguson and I, with one of the cow-hands, and a friend from the East, took the wagon for an antelope hunt in the

broken country between the Little Missouri and the Beaver. The cowboy drove the wagon to a small spring, near some buttes which are well distinguished by a number of fossil tree-stumps; while the rest of us, who were mounted on good horses, made a circle after antelope. We found none, and rode on to camp, reaching it about the middle of the afternoon. We had noticed several columns of smoke in the southeast, showing that prairie fires were under way; but we thought that they were too far off to endanger our camp, and accordingly unsaddled our horses and sat down to a dinner of bread, beans, and coffee. Before we were through the smoke began to pour over a ridge a mile distant in such quantities that we ran thither with our slickers, hoping to find some stretch of broken ground where the grass was sparse, and where we could fight the fire with effect. Our hopes were vain. Before we reached the ridge the fire came over its crest, and ran down in a long tongue between two scoria buttes. Here the grass was quite short and thin, and we did our best to beat out the flames; but they gradually gained on us, and as they reached the thicker grass lower down the slope, they began to roar and dart forward in a way that bade us pay heed to our own safety. Finally they reached a winding line of brushwood in the bottom of the coulie; and as this burst into a leaping blaze we saw it was high time to look to the safety of our camp, and ran back to it at top speed. Ferguson, who had been foremost in fighting the fire, was already scorched and blackened.

We were camped on the wagon trail which leads along the divide almost due south to Sentinel Butte. The line of fire was fanned by a southeasterly breeze, and was therefore advancing diagonally to the divide. If we could drive the wagon southward on the trail in time to get it past the fire before the latter reached the divide, we would be to windward of the flames, and therefore in safety. Accordingly, while the others were hastily harnessing the team, and tossing the bedding and provisions into the wagon, I threw the saddle on my horse, and galloped down the trail, to see if there was yet time to adopt this expedient. I soon found that there was not. Half a mile from camp the trail dipped into a deep coulie, where fair-sized trees and dense undergrowth made a long winding row of brush and timber. The trail led right under the trees at the upper end of this coulie. As I galloped by I saw that the fire had struck the trees a quarter of a mile below me; in the dried timber it instantly sprang aloft like a giant, and roared in a thunderous monotone as it swept up the coulie. I galloped to the hill ridge ahead, saw that the fire line had already reached the divide, and turned my horse sharp on his haunches. As I again passed under the trees, the fire, running like a race-horse in the brush, had reached the road; its breath was hot in my face; tongues of quivering flame leaped over my head and kindled the grass on the hillside fifty yards away.

When I got back to camp Ferguson had taken measures for the safety of the wagon. He had moved it across the coulie, which at

this point had a wet bottom, making a bar to the progress of the flames until they had time to work across lower down. Meanwhile we fought to keep the fire from entering the the well-grassed space on the hither side of the coulie, between it and a row of scoria buttes. Favored by a streak of clay ground, where the grass was sparse, we succeeded in beating out the flame as it reached this clay streak, and again beating it out when it ran round the buttes and began to back up towards up against the wind. Then we recrossed the coulie with the wagon, before the fire swept up the farther side; and so, when the flames passed by, they left us camped on a green oasis in the midst of a charred, smoking desert. We thus saved some good grazing for our horses.

But our fight with the fire had only begun. No stockman will see a fire waste the range and destroy the winter feed of the stock without spending every ounce of his strength in the effort to put a stop to its ravages—even when, as in our case, the force of men and horses at hand is so small as to offer only the very slenderest hope of success.

We set about the task in the way customary in the cattle country. It is impossible for any but a very large force to make head against a prairie fire while there is any wind; but the wind usually fails after nightfall, and accordingly the main fight is generally waged during the hours of darkness.

Before dark we drove to camp and shot a stray steer, and then split its carcass in two lengthwise with an axe. After sundown the

wind lulled; and we started towards the line of fire, which was working across a row of broken grassy hills, three quarters of a mile distant. Two of us were on horseback, dragging a half carcass, bloody side down, by means of ropes leading from our saddle-horns to the fore and hind legs; the other two followed on foot with slickers and wet saddle blankets. There was a reddish glow in the night air, and the waving, bending lines of flame showed in great bright curves against the hillside ahead of us.

When we reached them, we found the fire burning in a long, continuous line. It was not making rapid headway, for the air was still, and the flames stood upright, two or three feet high. Lengthening the ropes, one of us spurred his horse across the fire line and then, wheeling, we dragged the carcass along it; one horseman being on the burnt ground, and one on the unburnt grass, while the body of the steer lay lengthwise across the line. The weight and the blood smothered the fire as we twitched the carcass over the burning grass, and the two men following behind with their blankets and slickers readily beat out any isolated tufts of flame.

The fire made the horses wild, and it was not always easy to manage both them and the ropes, so as to keep the carcass true on the line. Sometimes there would be a slight puff of wind, and then the man on the grass side of the line ran the risk of a scorching. We were blackened with smoke, and the taut ropes hurt our thighs, while at times the plunging horses tried to buck or bolt. It

was worse when we came to some deep gully or ravine, breaking the line of fire. Into this we of course had to plunge, so as to get across to the fire on the other side. After the glare of the flame the blackness of the ravine was Stygian; we could see nothing, and simply spurred our horses into it anywhere, taking our chances. Down we would go, stumbling, sliding, and pitching, over cut banks and into holes and bushes, while the carcass bounded behind, now catching on a stump, and now fetching loose with a "pluck" that brought it full on the horses' haunches, driving them nearly crazy with fright. The pull up the opposite bank was, if anything, worse.

By midnight the half carcass was worn through; but we had stifled the fire in the comparatively level country to the eastwards. Back we went to camp, drank huge draughts of muddy water, devoured roast ox-ribs, and dragged out the other half carcass to fight the fire on the west. But after hours of wearing labor we found ourselves altogether baffled by the exceeding roughness of the ground. There was some little risk to us who were on horseback, dragging the carcass; we had to feel our way along knife-like ridges in the dark, one ahead and the other behind, while the steer dangled over the precipice on one side; and in going down the buttes and into the canyons only by extreme care could we avoid getting tangled in the ropes and rolling down in a heap. Moreover the fire was in such rough places that the carcass could not be twitched fairly over it, and so we could not put it out. Before dawn we

were obliged to abandon our fruitless efforts and seek camp, stiffened and weary. From a hill we looked back through the pitchy night at the fire we had failed to conquer. It had been broken into many lines by the roughness of the chasm-strewn and hilly country. Of these lines of flame some were in advance, some behind, some rushing forward in full blast and fury, some standing still; here and there one wheeling towards a flank, or burning in a semicircle, round an isolated hill. Some of the lines were flickering out; gaps were showing in others. In the darkness it looked like the rush of a mighty army, bearing triumphantly onwards, in spite of a resistance so stubborn as to break its formation into many fragments and cause each one of them to wage its own battle for victory or defeat.

On the wide plains where the prong-buck dwells the hunter must sometimes face thirst, as well as fire and frost. The only time I ever really suffered from thirst was while hunting prong-buck.

It was late in the summer. I was with the ranch wagon on the way to join a round-up, and as we were out of meat I started for a day's hunt. Before leaving in the morning I helped to haul the wagon across the river. It was fortunate I stayed, as it turned out. There was no regular ford where we made the crossing; we anticipated no trouble, as the water was very low, the season being dry. However, we struck a quicksand, in which the wagon settled, while the frightened horses floundered helplessly. All the riders at once

got their ropes on the wagon, and hauling from the saddle, finally pulled it through. This took time; and it was ten o'clock when I rode away from the river, at which my horse and I had just drunk—our last drink for over twenty-four hours as it turned out.

After two or three hours' ride, up winding coulies, and through the scorched desolation of patches of Bad Lands, I reached the rolling prairie. The heat and drought had long burned the short grass dull brown; the bottoms of what had been pools were covered with hard, dry, cracked earth. The day was cloudless, and the heat oppressive. There were many antelope, but I got only one shot, breaking a buck's leg; and though I followed it for a couple of hours I could not overtake it. By this time it was late in the afternoon, and I was far away from the river; so I pushed for a creek, in the bed of which I had always found pools of water, especially towards the head, as is usual with plains water courses. To my chagrin, however, they all proved to be dry; and though I rode up the creek bed toward the head, carefully searching for any sign of water, night closed on me before I found any. For two or three hours I stumbled on, leading my horse, in my fruitless search; then a tumble over a cut bank in the dark warned me that I might as well stay where I was for the rest of the warm night Accordingly I unsaddled the horse, and tied him to a sage brush; after awhile he began to feed on the dewy grass. At first I was too thirsty to sleep. Finally I fell into slumber, and when I awoke at dawn I felt no thirst.

For an hour or two more I continued my search for water in the creek bed; then abandoned it and rode straight for the river. By the time we reached it my thirst had come back with redoubled force, my mouth was parched, and the horse was in quite as bad a plight; we rushed down to the brink, and it seemed as if we could neither of us ever drink our fill of the tepid, rather muddy water. Of course this experience was merely unpleasant; thirst is not a source of real danger in the plains country proper, whereas in the hideous deserts that extend from southern Idaho through Utah and Nevada to Arizona, it ever menaces with death the hunter and explorer.

In the plains the weather is apt to be in extremes; the heat is tropical, the cold arctic, and the droughts are relieved by furious floods. These are generally most severe and lasting in the spring, after the melting of the snow; and fierce local freshets follow the occasional cloudbursts. The large rivers then become wholly impassable, and even the smaller are formidable obstacles. It is not easy to get cattle across a swollen stream, where the current runs like a turbid mill-race over the bed of shifting quicksand. Once five of us took a thousand head of trail steers across the Little Missouri when the river was up, and it was no light task. The muddy current was boiling past the banks, covered with driftwood and foul yellow froth, and the frightened cattle shrank from entering it. At last, by hard riding, with much loud shouting and swinging of ropes, we got the leaders in, and the whole herd followed. After them we

went in our turn, the horses swimming at one moment, and the next staggering and floundering through the quicksand. I was riding my pet cutting horse, Muley, which has the provoking habit of making great bounds where the water is just not deep enough for swimming; once he almost unseated me. Some of the cattle were caught by the currents and rolled over and over; most of these we were able, with the help of our ropes, to put on their feet again; only one was drowned, or rather choked in a quicksand. Many swam down stream, and in consequence struck a difficult landing, where the river ran under a cut bank; these we had to haul out with our ropes. Both men and horses were well tired by the time the whole herd was across.

Although I have often had a horse down in quicksand, or in crossing a swollen river, and have had to work hard to save him, I have never myself lost one under such circumstances. Yet once I saw the horse of one of my men drown under him directly in front of the ranch house, while he was trying to cross the river. This was in early spring, soon after the ice had broken.

When making long wagon trips over the great plains, antelope often offer the only source of meat supply, save for occasional water fowl, sage fowl, and prairie fowl—the sharp-tailed prairie fowl, be it understood. This is the characteristic grouse of the cattle country; the true prairie fowl is a bird of the farming land farther east.

Towards the end of the summer of '92 I found it necessary to travel from my ranch to

the Black Hills, some two hundred miles south. The ranch wagon went with me, driven by an all-round plainsman, a man of iron nerves and varied past, the sheriff of our county. He was an old friend of mine; at one time I had served as deputy-sheriff for the northern end of the county. In the wagon we carried our food and camp kit, and our three rolls of bedding, each wrapped in a thick, nearly waterproof canvas sheet; we had a tent, but we never needed it. The load being light, the wagon was drawn by but a span of horses, a pair of wild runaways, tough, and good travellers. My foreman and I rode beside the wagon on our wiry, unkempt, unshod cattle-ponies. They carried us all day at a rack, pace, single-foot or slow lope, varied by rapid galloping when we made long circles after game; the trot, the favorite gait with eastern park-riders, is disliked by all peoples who have to do much of their life-work in the saddle.

The first day's ride was not attractive. The heat was intense and the dust stifling, as we had to drive some loose horses for the first few miles, and afterwards to ride up and down the sandy river bed, where the cattle had gathered, to look over some young steers we had put on the range the preceding spring. When we did camp it was by a pool of stagnant water, in a creek bottom, and the mosquitoes were a torment. Nevertheless, as evening fell, it was pleasant to climb a little knoll nearby and gaze at the rows of strangely colored buttes, grass-clad, or of bare earth and scoria, their soft reds and purples showing as through a

haze, and their irregular outlines gradually losing their sharpness in the fading twilight.

Next morning the weather changed, growing cooler, and we left the tangle of ravines and Bad Lands, striking out across the vast sea-like prairies. Hour after hour, under the bright sun, the wagon drew slowly ahead, over the immense rolling stretches of short grass, dipping down each long slope until it reached the dry, imperfectly outlined creek bed at the bottom,—wholly devoid of water and without so much as a shrub of wood,—and then ascending the gentle rise on the other side until at last it topped the broad divide, or watershed, beyond which lay the shallow winding coulies of another creek system. From each rise of ground we looked far and wide over the sunlit prairie, with its interminable undulations. The sicklebill curlews which in spring, while breeding, hover above the travelling horseman with ceaseless clamor, had for the most part gone southward. We saw only one small party of half a dozen birds; they paid little heed to us, but piped to one another, making short flights, and on alighting stood erect, first spreading and then folding and setting their wings with a slow, graceful motion. Little horned larks continually ran along the ruts of the faint wagon track, just ahead of the team, and twittered plaintively as they rose, while flocks of longspurs swept hither and thither, in fitful, irregular flight.

My foreman and I usually rode far off to one side of the wagon, looking out for antelope. Of these we at first saw few, but they

grew more plentiful as we journeyed onward, approaching a big, scantily wooded creek, where I had found the prong-horn abundant in previous seasons. They were very wary and watchful whether going singly or in small parties, and the lay of the land made it exceedingly difficult to get within range. The last time I had hunted in this neighborhood was in the fall, at the height of the rutting season. Prong-bucks, even more than other game, seem fairly maddened by erotic excitement. At the time of my former hunt they were in ceaseless motion; each master buck being incessantly occupied in herding his harem, and fighting would-be rivals, while single bucks chased single does as grayhounds chase hares, or else, if no does were in sight, from sheer excitement ran to and fro as if crazy, racing at full speed in one direction, then halting, wheeling, and tearing back again just as hard as they could go.

At this time, however, the rut was still some weeks off, and all the bucks had to do was to feed and keep a look-out for enemies. Try my best, I could not get within less than four or five hundred yards, and though I took a number of shots at these, or at even longer distances, I missed. If a man is out merely for a day's hunt, and has all the time he wishes, he will not scare the game and waste cartridges by shooting at such long ranges, preferring to spend half a day or more in patient waiting and careful stalking; but if he is travelling, and is therefore cramped for time, he must take his chances, even at the cost of burning a good deal of powder.

I was finally helped to success by a characteristic freak of the game I was following. No other animals are as keen-sighted, or are normally as wary as prong-horns; but no others are so whimsical and odd in their behavior at times, or so subject to fits of the most stupid curiosity and panic. Late in the afternoon, on topping a rise I saw two good bucks racing off about three hundred yards to one side; I sprang to the ground, and fired three shots at them in vain, as they ran like quarter-horses until they disappeared over a slight swell. In a minute, however, back they came, suddenly appearing over the crest of the same swell, immediately in front of me, and, as I afterwards found by pacing, some three hundred and thirty yards away. They stood side by side facing me, and remained motionless, unheeding the crack of the Winchester; I aimed at the right-hand one, but a front shot of the kind, at such a distance, is rather difficult, and it was not until I fired for the fourth time that he sank back out of sight. I could not tell whether I had killed him, and took two shots at his mate, as the latter went off, but without effect. Running forward, I found the first one dead, the bullet having gone through him lengthwise; the other did not seem satisfied even yet, and kept hanging round in the distance for some minutes, looking at us.

I had thus bagged one prong-buck, as the net outcome of the expenditure of fourteen cartridges. This was certainly not good shooting; but neither was it as bad as it would seem to the man inexperienced in an-

telope hunting. When fresh meat is urgently needed, and when time is too short, the hunter who is after antelope in an open flattish country must risk many long shots. In no other kind of hunting is there so much long-distance shooting, or so many shots fired for every head of game bagged.

Throwing the buck into the wagon we continued our journey across the prairie, no longer following any road, and before sunset jolted down towards the big creek for which we had been heading. There were many water-holes therein, and timber of considerable size; box alder and ash grew here and there in clumps and fringes, beside the serpentine curves of the nearly dry torrent bed, the growth being thickest under the shelter of the occasional low bluffs. We drove down to a heavily grassed bottom, near a deep, narrow pool, with, at one end, that rarest of luxuries in the plains country, a bubbling spring of pure, cold water. With plenty of wood, delicious water, ample feed for the horses, and fresh meat we had every comfort and luxury incident to camp life in good weather. The bedding was tossed out on a smooth spot beside the wagon; the horses were watered and tethered to picket pins where the feed was best; water was fetched from the spring; a deep hole was dug for the fire, and the grass roundabout carefully burned off; and in a few moments the bread was baking in the Dutch oven, the potatoes were boiling, antelope steaks were sizzling in the frying-pan, and the kettle was ready for the tea. After supper, eaten with the relish known well to every hard-working

and successful hunter, we sat for half an hour or so round the fire, and then turned in under the blankets, pulled the tarpaulins over us, and listened drowsily to the wailing of the coyotes until we fell sound asleep.

We determined to stay in this camp all day, so as to try and kill another prong-buck, as we would soon be past the good hunting grounds. I did not have to go far for my game next morning, for soon after breakfast, while sitting on my canvas bag cleaning my rifle, the sheriff suddenly called to me that a bunch of antelope were coming towards us. Sure enough there they were, four in number, rather over half a mile off, on the first bench of the prairie, two or three hundred yards back from the creek, leisurely feeding in our direction. In a minute or two they were out of sight, and I instantly ran along the creek towards them for a quarter of a mile, and then crawled up a short shallow coulie, close to the head of which they seemed likely to pass. When nearly at the end I cautiously raised my hatless head, peered through some straggling weeds, and at once saw the horns of the buck. He was a big fellow, about a hundred and twenty yards off; the others, a doe and two kids, were in front. As I lifted myself on my elbows he halted and turned his raised head towards me; the sunlight shone bright on his supple, vigorous body with its markings of sharply contrasted brown and white. I pulled trigger, and away he went; but I could see that his race was nearly run, and he fell after going a few hundred yards.

Soon after this a wind storm blew up so

violent that we could hardly face it. In the late afternoon it died away, and I again walked out to hunt, but saw only does and kids, at which I would not shoot. As the sun set, leaving bars of amber and pale red in the western sky, the air became absolutely calm. In the waning evening the low, far-off ridges were touched with a violet light; then the hues grew sombre, and still darkness fell on the lonely prairie.

Next morning we drove to the river, and kept near it for several days, most of the time following the tracks made by the heavy wagons accompanying the trail herds—this being one of the regular routes followed by the great throng of slow-moving cattle yearly driven from the south. At other times we made our own road. Twice or thrice we passed ranch houses; the men being absent on the round-up they were shut, save one which was inhabited by two or three lean Texan cow-punchers, with sun-burned faces and reckless eyes, who had come up with a taail herd from the Cherokee strip. Once, near the old Sioux crossing, where the Dakota war bands used to ford the river on their forays against the Crows and the settlers along the Yellowstone, we met a large horse herd. The tough, shabby, tired-looking animals, one or two of which were loaded with bedding and a scanty supply of food, were driven by three travel-worn, hard-faced men, with broad hats, shaps, and long pistols in their belts. They had brought the herd over plain and mountain pass all the way from far distant Oregon.

It was a wild, rough country, bare of trees save for a fringe of cottonwoods along the river, and occasional clumps of cedar on the jagged, brown buttes; as we went farther the hills turned the color of chalk, and were covered with a growth of pine. We came upon acres of sunflowers as we journeyed southward; they are not as tall as they are in the rich bottom lands of Kansas, where the splendid blossoms, on their strong stalks, stand as high as the head of a man on horseback.

Though there were many cattle here, big game was scarce. However, I killed plenty of prairie chickens and sage hens for the pot; and as the sage hens were still feeding largely on crickets and grasshoppers, and not exclusively on sage, they were just as good eating as the prairie chickens. I used the rifle, cutting off their heads or necks, and, as they had to be shot on the ground, and often while in motion, or else while some distance away, it was more difficult than shooting off the heads of grouse in the mountains, where the birds sit motionless in trees. The head is a small mark, while to hit the body is usually to spoil the bird; so I found that I averaged three or four cartridges for every head neatly taken off, the remaining shots representing spoiled birds and misses.

For the last sixty or seventy miles of our trip we left the river and struck off across a great, desolate gumbo prairie. There was no game, no wood for fuel, and the rare water-holes were far apart, so that we were glad when, as we toiled across the monotonous

succession of long, swelling ridges, the dim, cloud-like mass, looming vague and purple on the rim of the horizon ahead of us, gradually darkened and hardened into the bold outline of the Black Hills.

CHAPTER VI.

AMONG THE HIGH HILLS; THE BIGHORN OR MOUNTAIN SHEEP.

DURING the summer of 1886 I hunted chiefly to keep the ranch in meat. It was a very pleasant summer; although it was followed by the worst winter we ever witnessed on the plains. I was much at the ranch, where I had a good deal of writing to do; but every week or two I left, to ride among the line camps, or spend a few days on any round-up which happened to be in the neighborhood.

These days of vigorous work among the cattle were themselves full of pleasure. At dawn we were in the saddle, the morning air cool in our faces; the red sunrise saw us loping across the grassy reaches of prairie land, or climbing in single file among the rugged buttes. All forenoon we spent riding the long circle with the cow-punchers of the round-up; in the afternoon we worked the herd, cutting the cattle, with much breakneck galloping and dextrous halting and wheeling. Then came the excitement and hard labor of roping, throwing, and branding the wild and vigorous range calves; in a corral, if one was handy, otherwise in a ring of horsemen. Soon after nightfall we lay down, in a log hut

or tent, if at a line camp; under the open sky, if with the round-up wagon.

After ten days or so of such work, in which every man had to do his full share—for laggards and idlers, no matter who, get no mercy in the real and healthy democracy of the round-up—I would go back to the ranch to turn to my books with added zest for a fortnight. Yet even during these weeks at the ranch there was some out-door work; for I was breaking two or three colts. I took my time, breaking them gradually and gently, not, after the usual cowboy fashion, in a hurry, by sheer main strength and rough riding, with the attendant danger to the limbs of the man and very probable ruin to the manners of the horse. We rose early; each morning I stood on the low-roofed verandah, looking out under the line of murmuring, glossy-leaved cottonwoods, across the shallow river, to see the sun flame above the line of bluffs opposite. In the evening I strolled off for an hour or two's walk, rifle in hand. The roomy, homelike ranch house, with its log walls, shingled roof, and big chimneys and fireplaces, stands in a glade, in the midst of the thick forest, which covers half the bottom; behind rises, bare and steep, the wall of peaks, ridges, and table-lands.

During the summer in question, I once or twice shot a whitetail buck right on this large bottom; once or twice I killed a blacktail in the hills behind, not a mile from the ranch house. Several times I killed and brought in prong-bucks, rising before dawn, and riding off on a good horse for an all day's hunt

in the rolling prairie country twelve or fifteen miles away. Occasionally I took the wagon and one of the men, driving to some good hunting ground and spending a night or two; usually returning with two or three prong-bucks, and once with an elk—but this was later in the fall. Not infrequently I went away by myself on horseback for a couple of days, when all the men were on the round-up, and when I wished to hunt thoroughly some country quite a distance from the ranch. I made one such hunt in late August, because I happened to hear that a small bunch of mountain sheep were haunting a tract of very broken ground, with high hills, about fifteen miles away.

I left the ranch early in the morning, riding my favorite hunting horse, old Manitou. The blanket and oilskin slicker were rolled and strapped behind the saddle; for provisions I carried salt, a small bag of hard tack, and a little tea and sugar, with a metal cup in which to boil my water. The rifle and a score of cartridges in my woven belt completed my outfit. On my journey I shot two prairie chickens from a covey in the bottom of a brush coulie.

I rode more than six hours before reaching a good spot to camp. At first my route lay across grassy plateaus, and along smooth, wooded coulies; but after a few miles the ground became very rugged and difficult. At last I got into the heart of the Bad Lands proper, where the hard, wrinkled earth was torn into shapes as sullen and grotesque as those of dreamland. The hills rose high, their barren flanks carved and channelled,

their tops mere needles and knife crests. Bands of black, red, and purple varied the gray and yellow-brown of their sides; the tufts of scanty vegetation were dull green. Sometimes I rode my horse at the bottom of narrow washouts, between straight walls of clay, but a few feet apart; sometimes I had to lead him as he scrambled up, down, and across the sheer faces of the buttes. The glare from the bare clay walls dazzled the eye; the air was burning under the hot August sun. I saw nothing living except the rattlesnakes, of which there were very many.

At last, in the midst of this devil's wilderness, I came on a lovely valley. A spring trickled out of a cedar canyon, and below this spring the narrow, deep ravine was green with luscious grass and was smooth for some hundred of yards. Here I unsaddled, and turned old Manitou loose to drink and feed at his leisure. At the edge of the dark cedar wood I cleared a spot for my bed, and drew a few dead sticks for the fire. Then I lay down and watched drowsily until the afternoon shadows filled the wild and beautiful gorge in which I was camped. This happened early, for the valley was very narrow and the hills on either hand were steep and high.

Springing to my feet, I climbed the nearest ridge, and then made my way, by hard clambering, from peak to peak and from crest to crest, sometimes crossing and sometimes skirting the deep washouts and canyons. When possible I avoided appearing on the sky line, and I moved with the utmost caution, walking in a wide sweep so as to hunt across and up

wind. There was much sheep sign, some of of it fresh, though I saw none of the animals themselves; the square slots, with the indented marks of the toe points wide apart, contrasting strongly with the heart-shaped and delicate footprints of deer. The animals had, according to their habit, beaten trails along the summits of the higher crests; little side trails leading to any spur, peak, or other vantage-point from which there was a wide outlook over the country roundabout.

The bighorns of the Bad Lands, unlike those of the mountains, shift their range but little, winter or summer. Save in the breeding season, when each master ram gets together his own herd, the ewes, lambs, and yearlings are apt to go in bands by themselves, while the males wander in small parties; now and then a very morose old fellow lives by himself, in some precipitous, out-of-the-way retreat. The rut begins with them much later than with deer; the exact time varies with the locality, but it is always after the bitter winter weather has set in. Then the old rams fight fiercely together, and on rare occasions utter a long grunting bleat or call. They are marvellous climbers, and dwell by choice always among cliffs and jagged, broken ground, whether wooded or not. An old bighorn ram is heavier than the largest buck; his huge, curved horns, massive yet supple build, and proud bearing mark him as one of the noblest beasts of the chase. He is wary; great skill and caution must be shown in approaching him; and no one but a good climber, with a steady head, sound lungs, and

trained muscles, can successfully hunt him in his own rugged fastnesses. The chase of no other kind of American big game ranks higher, or more thoroughly tests the manliest qualties of the hunter.

I walked back to camp in the gloaming, taking care to reach it before it grew really dark; for in the Bad Lands it is entirely impossible to travel, or to find any given locality, after nightfall. Old Manitou had eaten his fill and looked up at me with pricked ears, and wise, friendly face as I climbed down the side of the cedar canyon; then he came slowly towards me to see if I had not something for him. I rubbed his soft nose and gave him a cracker; then I picketed him to a solitary cedar, where the feed was good. Afterwards I kindled a small fire, roasted both prairie fowl, ate one, and put the other by for breakfast; and soon rolled myself in my blanket, with the saddle for a pillow, and the oilskin beneath. Manitou was munching the grass nearby. I lay just outside the line of stiff black cedars; the night air was soft in my face; I gazed at the shining and brilliant multitude of stars until my eyelids closed.

The chill breath which comes before dawn awakened me. It was still and dark. Through the gloom I could indistinctly make out the loom of the old horse, lying down. I was speedily ready, and groped and stumbled slowly up the hill, and then along its crest to a peak. Here I sat down and waited a quarter of an hour or so, until gray appeared in the east, and the dim light-streaks enabled me to walk farther. Before sunrise I was

two miles from camp; then I crawled cautiously to a high ridge and crouching behind it scanned all the landscape eagerly. In a few minutes a movement about a third of a mile to the right, midway down a hill, caught my eye. Another glance showed me three white specks moving along the hillside. They were the white rumps of three fine mountain sheep, on their way to drink at a little alkaline pool in the bottom of a deep, narrow valley. In a moment they went out of sight round a bend of the valley; and I rose and trotted briskly towards them, along the ridge. There were two or three deep gullies to cross, and a high shoulder over which to clamber; so I was out of breath when I reached the bend beyond which they had disappeared. Taking advantage of a scrawny sage brush as cover I peeped over the edge, and at once saw the sheep, three big young rams. They had finished drinking and were standing beside the little mirey pool, about three hundred yards distant. Slipping back I dropped down into the bottom of the valley, where a narrow washout zigzagged from side to side, between straight walls of clay. The pool was in the upper end of this washout, under a cut bank.

An indistinct game trail, evidently sometimes used by both bighorn and blacktail, ran up this washout; the bottom was of clay so that I walked noiselessly; and the crookedness of the washout's course afforded ample security against discovery by the sharp eyes of the quarry. In a couple of minutes I stalked stealthily round the last bend, my rifle

cocked and at the ready, expecting to see the rams by the pool. However, they had gone, and the muddy water was settling in their deep hoof marks. Running on I looked over the edge of the cut bank and saw them slowly quartering up the hillside, cropping the sparse tufts of coarse grass. I whistled, and as they stood at gaze I put a bullet into the biggest, a little too far aft of the shoulder, but ranging forward. He raced after the others, but soon fell behind, and turned off on his own line, at a walk, with dropping head. As he bled freely I followed his tracks, found him, very sick, in a washout a quarter of a mile beyond, and finished him with another shot. After dressing him, and cutting off the saddle and hams, as well as the head, I walked back to camp, breakfasted, and rode Manitou to where the sheep lay. Packing it securely behind the saddle, and shifting the blanket roll to in front of the saddle-horn, I led the horse until we were clear of the Bad Lands; then mounted him, and was back at the ranch soon after midday. The mutton of a fat young mountain ram, at this season of the year, is delicious.

Such quick success is rare in hunting sheep. Generally each head has cost me several days of hard, faithful work; and more than once I have hunted over a week without any reward whatsoever. But the quarry is so noble that the ultimate triumph—sure to come, if the hunter will but persevere long enough—atones for all previous toil and failure.

Once a lucky stalk and shot at a bighorn

was almost all that redeemed a hunt in the Rockies from failure. I was high among the mountains at the time, but was dogged by ill luck; I had seen but little, and I had not shot very well. One morning I rose early, and hunted steadily until midday without seeing anything. A mountain hunter was with me. At noon we sat down to rest, and look over the country, from behind a shield of dwarf evergreens, on the brink of a mighty chasm. The rocks fell downwards in huge cliffs, stern and barren; from far below rose the strangled roaring of the torrent, as the foaming masses of green and white water churned round the boulders in the stream bed. Except this humming of the wild water, and the soughing of the pines, there was no sound. We were sitting on a kind of jutting promontory of rock so that we could scan the cliffs far and near. First I took the glasses and scrutinized the ground almost rod by rod, for nearly half an hour; then my companion took them in turn. It is very hard to make out game, especially when lying down, and still; and it is curious to notice how, after fruitlessly scanning a country through the glasses for a considerable period, a herd of animals will suddenly appear in the field of vision as if by magic. In this case, while my companion held the glasses for the second time, a slight motion caught his eye; and looking attentively he made out, five or six hundred yards distant, a mountain ram lying among some loose rocks and small bushes at the head of a little grassy cove or nook, in a shallow break between two walls of the cliff. So well did the bluish gray of its

body harmonize in tint with the rocks and shrubbery that it was some time before I could see it, even when pointed out to me.

The wind was favorable, and we at once drew back and began a cautious stalk. It was impossible, owing to the nature of the cliffs above and below the bighorn's resting-place, to get a shot save by creeping along nearly on a level with him. Accordingly we worked our way down through a big cleft in the rocks, being forced to go very slowly and carefully lest we should start a loose stone; and at last reached a narrow terrace of rock and grass along which we walked comparatively at our ease. Soon it dwindled away, and we then had to do our only difficult piece of climbing —a clamber for fifty or sixty feet across a steep cliff shoulder. Some little niches and cracks in the rock and a few projections and diminutive ledges on its surface, barely enabled us to swarm across, with painstaking care—not merely to avoid alarming the game this time, but also to avoid a slip which would have proved fatal. Once across we came on a long, grassy shelf, leading round a shoulder into the cleft where the ram lay. As I neared the end I crept forward on hands and knees, and then crawled flat, shoving the rifle ahead of me, until I rounded the shoulder and peered into the rift. As my eyes fell on the ram he sprang to his feet, with a clatter of loose stones, and stood facing me, some sixty yards off, his dark face and white muzzle brought out finely by the battered, curved horns. I shot into his chest, hitting him in the sticking place; and after a few mad

bounds he tumbled headlong, and fell a very great distance, unfortunately injuring one horn.

When much hunted, bighorn become the wariest of all American game, and their chase is then peculiarly laborious and exciting. But where they have known nothing of men, not having been molested by hunters, they are exceedingly tame. Professor John Bache McMaster informs me that in 1877 he penetrated to the Uintah Mountains of Wyoming, which were then almost unknown to hunters; he found all the game very bold, and the wild sheep in particular so unsuspicious that he could walk up to within short rifle range of them in the open.

On the high mountains bighorn occasionally get killed by a snow-slide. My old friend, the hunter Woody, once saw a band which started such an avalanche by running along a steep sloping snow field, it being in the spring; for several hundred yards it thundered at their heels, but by desperate racing they just managed to get clear. Woody was also once an eye-witness to the ravages the cougar commits among these wild sheep. He was stalking a band in the snow when he saw them suddenly scatter at a run in every direction. Coming up he found the traces of a struggle, and the track of a body being dragged through the snow, together with the round footmarks of the cougar; a little farther on lay a dead ewe, the blood flowing from the fang wounds in her throat.

CHAPTER VII.

MOUNTAIN GAME; THE WHITE GOAT.

LATE one August I started on a trip to the Big Hole Basin, in Western Montana, to hunt white goats. With me went a friend of many hunts, John Willis, a tried mountain man.

We left the railroad at the squalid little hamlet of Divide, where we hired a team and wagon from a "busted" granger, suspected of being a Mormon, who had failed, even with the help of irrigation, in raising a crop. The wagon was in fairly good order; the harness was rotten, and needed patching with ropes; while the team consisted of two spoiled horses, overworked and thin, but full of the devil the minute they began to pick up condition. However, on the frontier one soon grows to accept little facts of this kind with bland indifference; and Willis was not only an expert teamster, but possessed that inexhaustible fertility of resource and unfailing readiness in an emergency so characteristic of the veteran of the border. Through hard experience he had become master of plains-craft and woodcraft, skilled in all frontier lore.

For a couple of days we jogged up the valley of the Big Hole River, along the mail road. At night we camped under our wagon.

At the mouth of the stream the valley was a mere gorge, but it broadened steadily the farther up we went, till the rapid river wound through a wide expanse of hilly, treeless prairie. On each side the mountains rose, their lower flanks and the foot-hills covered with the evergreen forest. We got milk and bread at the scattered log-houses of the few settlers; and for meat we shot sage fowl, which abounded. They were feeding on grasshoppers at this time, and the flesh, especially of the young birds, was as tender and well tasting as possible; whereas, when we again passed through the valley in September, we found the birds almost uneatable, being fairly bitter with sage. Like all grouse they are far tamer earlier in the season than later, being very wild in winter; and, of course, they are boldest where they are least hunted; but for some unexplained reason they are always tamer than the sharp-tail prairie fowl which are to be found in the same locality.

Finally we reached the neighborhood of the Battle Ground, where a rude stone monument commemorates the bloody drawn fight between General Gibbons' soldiers and the Nez Percés warriors of Chief Joseph. Here, on the third day of our journey, we left the beaten road and turned toward the mountains, following an indistinct trail made by wood-choppers. We met with our full share of the usual mishaps incident to prairie travel; and towards evening our team got mired in crossing a slough. We attempted the crossing with some misgivings, which were warranted by

the result; for the second plunge of the horses brought them up to their bellies in the morass, where they stuck. It was freezing cold, with a bitter wind blowing, and the bog holes were skimmed with ice; so that we passed a thoroughly wretched two hours while freeing the horses and unloading the wagon. However, we eventually got across; my companion preserving an absolutely unruffled temper throughout, perseveringly whistling the "Arkansas Traveller." At one period, when we were up to our waists in the icy mud, it began to sleet and hail, and I muttered that I would "rather it did n't storm"; whereat he stopped whistling for a moment to make the laconic rejoinder, "We 're not having our rathers this trip."

At nightfall we camped among the willow bushes by a little brook. For firewood we had only dead willow sticks; they made a hot blaze which soon died out; and as the cold grew intense, we rolled up in our blankets as soon as we had eaten our supper. The climate of the Big Hole Basin is alpine; that night, though it was the 20th of August, the thermometer sank to 10° F.

Early next morning we struck camp, shivering with cold as we threw the stiff, frozen harness on the horses. We soon got among the foot-hills, where the forest was open and broken by large glades, forming what is called a park country. The higher we went the smaller grew the glades and the denser the woodland; and it began to be very difficult to get the wagon forward. In many places one man had to go ahead to pick out the way

and if necessary do a little chopping and lopping with the axe, while the other followed driving the team. At last we were brought to a standstill, and pitched camp beside a rapid, alder-choked brook in the uppermost of a series of rolling glades, hemmed in by mountains and the dense coniferous forest. Our tent stood under a grove of pines, close to the brook; at night we built in front of it a big fire of crackling, resinous logs. Our goods were sheltered by the wagon, or covered with a tarpaulin; we threw down sprays of odorous evergreens to make a resting-place for our bedding; we built small scaffolds on which to dry the flesh of elk and deer. In an hour or two we had round us all the many real comforts of such a little wilderness home.

Whoever has long roamed and hunted in the wilderness always cherishes with wistful pleasure the memory of some among the countless camps he has made. The camp by the margin of the clear, mountain-hemmed lake; the camp in the dark and melancholy forest, where the gusty wind booms through the tall pine tops; the camp under gnarled cottonwoods, on the bank of a shrunken river, in the midst of endless grassy prairies,—of these, and many like them, each has had its own charm. Of course in hunting one must expect much hardship and repeated disappointment; and in many a camp, bad weather, lack of shelter, hunger, thirst, or ill success with game, renders the days and nights irksome and trying. Yet the hunter worthy of the name always willingly takes the bitter if by so doing he can get the sweet, and gladly

balances failure and success, spurning the poorer souls who know neither.

We turned our horses loose, hobbling one; and as we did not look after them for several days, nothing but my companion's skill as a tracker enabled us to find them again. There was a spell of warm weather which brought out a few of the big bull-dog flies, which drive a horse—or indeed a man—nearly frantic; we were in the haunts of these dreaded and terrible scourges, which up to the beginning of August render it impossible to keep stock of any description unprotected where they abound, but which are never formidable after the first frost. In many parts of the wilderness these pests, or else the incredible swarms of mosquitoes, blackflies, and buffalo gnats, render life not worth living during the last weeks of spring and the early months of summer.

There were elk and deer in the neighborhood; also ruffed, blue, and spruce grouse; so that our camp was soon stocked with meat. Early one morning while Willis was washing in the brook, a little black bear thrust its sharp nose through the alders a few feet from him, and then hastily withdrew and was seen no more. The smaller wild-folk were more familiar. As usual in the northern mountains, the gray moose-birds and voluble, nervous little chipmunks made themselves at home in the camp. Parties of chickadees visited us occasionally. A family of flying squirrels lived overhead in the grove; and at nightfall they swept noiselessly from tree to tree, in long, graceful curves. There were

sparrows of several kinds moping about in the alders; and now and then one of them would sing a few sweet, rather mournful bars.

After several days' preliminary exploration we started on foot for white goat. We took no packs with us, each carrying merely his jacket, with a loaf of bread and a paper of salt thrust into the pockets. Our aim was to get well to one side of a cluster of high, bare peaks, and then to cross them and come back to camp; we reckoned that the trip would take three days.

All the first day we tramped through dense woods and across and around steep mountain spurs. We caught glimpses of two or three deer and a couple of elk, all does or fawns, however, which we made no effort to molest. Late in the afternoon we stumbled across a family of spruce grouse, which furnished us material for both supper and breakfast. The mountain men call this bird the fool-hen; and most certainly it deserves the name. The members of this particular flock, consisting of a hen and her three-parts grown chickens, acted with a stupidity unwonted even for their kind. They were feeding on the ground among some young spruce, and on our approach flew up and perched in the branches four or five feet above our heads. There they stayed, uttering a low, complaining whistle, and showed not the slightest suspicion when we came underneath them with long sticks and knocked four off their perches —for we did not wish to alarm any large game that might be in the neighborhood by firing. One particular bird was partially saved

from my first blow by the intervening twigs; however, it merely flew a few yards, and then sat with its bill open,—having evidently been a little hurt,—until I came up and knocked it over with a better directed stroke.

Spruce grouse are plentiful in the mountain forests of the northern Rockies, and, owing to the ease with which they are killed, they have furnished me my usual provender when off on trips of this kind, where I carried no pack. They are marvellously tame and stupid. The young birds are the only ones I have ever killed in this manner with a stick; but even a full plumaged old cock in September is easily slain with a stone by any one who is at all a good thrower. A man who has played much base-ball need never use a gun when after spruce grouse. They are the smallest of the grouse kind; the cock is very handsome, with red eyebrows and dark, glossy plumage. Moreover, he is as brave as he is stupid and good-looking, and in the love season becomes fairly crazy: at such time he will occasionally make feint of attacking a man, strutting, fluttering, and ruffling his feathers. The flesh of the spruce grouse is not so good as that of his ruffed and blue kinsfolk; and in winter, when he feeds on spruce buds, it is ill tasting. I have never been able to understand why closely allied species, under apparently the same surroundings, should differ so radically in such important traits as wariness and capacity to escape from foes. Yet the spruce grouse in this respect shows the most marked contrast to the blue grouse and the ruffed grouse. Of course all three kinds

vary greatly in their behavior accordingly as they do or do not live in localities where they have been free from man's persecutions. The ruffed grouse, a very wary game bird in all old-settled regions, is often absurdly tame in the wilderness; and under persecution, even the spruce grouse gains some little wisdom; but the latter never becomes as wary as the former, and under no circumstances is it possible to outwit the ruffed grouse by such clumsy means as serve for his simple-minded brother. There is a similar difference between the sage fowl and prairie fowl, in favor of the latter. It is odd that the largest and the smallest kinds of grouse found in the United States should be the tamest; and also the least savory.

After tramping all day through the forest, at nightfall we camped in its upper edge, just at the foot of the steep rock walls of the mountain. We chose a sheltered spot, where the small spruce grew thick, and there was much dead timber; and as the logs, though long, were of little girth, we speedily dragged together a number sufficient to keep the fire blazing all night. Having drunk our full at a brook we cut two forked willow sticks, and then each plucked a grouse, split it, thrust the willow-fork into it, and roasted it before the fire. Besides this we had salt, and bread; moreover we were hungry and healthily tired; so the supper seemed, and was, delicious. Then we turned up the collars of our jackets, and lay down, to pass the night in broken slumber; each time the fire died down the chill waked us, and we rose to feed it with fresh logs.

At dawn we rose, and cooked and ate the two remaining grouse. Then we turned our faces upwards, and passed a day of severe toil in climbing over the crags. Mountaineering is very hard work; and when we got high among the peaks, where snow filled the rifts, the thinness of the air forced me to stop for breath every few hundred yards of the ascent. We found much sign of white goats, but in spite of steady work and incessant careful scanning of the rocks, we did not see our quarry until early in the afternoon.

We had clambered up one side of a steep saddle of naked rock, some of the scarped ledges being difficult, and indeed dangerous, of ascent. From the top of the saddle a careful scrutiny of the neighboring peaks failed to reveal any game, and we began to go down the other side. The mountain fell away in a succession of low cliffs, and we had to move with the utmost caution. In letting ourselves down from ledge to ledge one would hold the guns until the other go safe footing, and then pass them down to him. In many places we had to work our way along the cracks in the faces of the frost-riven rocks. At last, just as we reached a little smooth shoulder, my companion said, pointing down beneath us, "Look at the white goat!"

A moment or two passed before I got my eyes on it. We were looking down into a basin-like valley, surrounded by high mountain chains. At one end of the basin was a low pass, where the ridge was cut up with the zigzag trails made by the countless herds of game which had travelled it for many genera-

tions. At the other end was a dark gorge, through which a stream foamed. The floor of the basin was bright emerald green, dotted with darker bands where belts of fir trees grew; and in its middle lay a little lake.

At last I caught sight of the goat, feeding on a terrace rather over a hundred and twenty-five yards below me. I promptly fired, but overshot. The goat merely gave a few jumps and stopped. My second bullet went through its lungs; but fearful lest it might escape to some inaccessible cleft or ledge I fired again, missing; and yet again, breaking its back. Down it went, and the next moment began to roll over and over, from ledge to ledge. I greatly feared it would break its horns; an annoying and oft-recurring incident of white-goat shooting, where the nature of the ground is such that the dead quarry often falls hundreds of feet, its body being torn to ribbons by the sharp crags. However in this case the goat speedily lodged unharmed in a little dwarf evergreen.

Hardly had I fired my fourth shot when my companion again exclaimed, "Look at the white goats! look at the white goats!" Glancing in the direction in which he pointed I speedily made out four more goats standing in a bunch rather less than a hundred yards off, to one side of my former line of fire. They were all looking up at me. They stood on a slab of white rock, with which the color of their fleece harmonized well: and their black horns, muzzles, eyes, and hoofs looked like dark dots on a light-colored surface, so that it took me more than one glance

to determine what they were. White goat invariably run up hill when alarmed, their one idea seeming to be to escape danger by getting above it; for their brute foes are able to overmatch them on anything like level ground, but are helpless against them among the crags. Almost as soon as I saw them these four started up the mountain, nearly in my direction, while I clambered down and across to meet them. They halted at the foot of a cliff, and I at the top, being unable to see them; but in another moment they came bounding and cantering up the sheer rocks, not moving quickly, but traversing the most seemingly impossible places by main strength and sure-footedness. As they broke by me, some thirty yards off, I fired two shots at the rearmost, an old buck, somewhat smaller than the one I had just killed; and he rolled down the mountain dead. Two of the others, a yearling and a kid, showed more alarm than their elders, and ran off at a brisk pace. The remaining one, an old she, went off a hundred yards, and then deliberately stopped and turned round to gaze at us for a couple of minutes! Verily the white goat is the fool-hen among beasts of the chase.

Having skinned and cut off the heads we walked rapidly onwards, slanting down the mountain side, and then over and down the pass of the game trails; for it was growing late and we wished to get well down among the timber before nightfall. On the way an eagle came soaring over head, and I shot at it twice without success. Having once killed an eagle on the wing with a rifle, I always

have a lurking hope that sometimes I may be able to repeat the feat. I revenged myself for the miss by knocking a large blue goshawk out of the top of a blasted spruce, where it was sitting in lazy confidence, its crop stuffed with rabbit and grouse.

A coupl of hours' hard walking brought us down to timber; just before dusk we reached a favorable camping spot in the forest, beside a brook, with plenty of dead trees for the night-fire. Moreover, the spot fortunately yielded us our supper too, in the shape of a flock of young spruce grouse, of which we shot off the heads of a couple. Immediately afterwards I ought to have procured our breakfast, for a cock of the same kind suddenly flew down nearby; but it was getting dark, I missed with the first shot, and with the second must have merely creased the neck, for though the tough old bird dropped, it fluttered and ran off among the underbrush and escaped.

We broiled our two grouse before our fire, dragged plenty of logs into a heap beside it, and then lay down to sleep fitfully, an hour or so at a time, throughout the night. We were continually wakened by the cold, when we had to rise and feed the flames. In the early morning we again started, walking for some time along the fresh trail made by a large band of elk, cows and calves. We thought we knew exactly the trend and outlet of the valley in which we were, and that therefore we could tell where the camp was; but, as so often happens in the wilderness, we had not reckoned aright, having passed over

one mountain spur too many, and entered the ravines of an entirely different watercourse-system. In consequence we became entangled in a network of hills and valleys, making circle after circle to find our bearings; and we only reached camp after twelve hours' tiresome tramp without food.

On another occasion I shot a white goat while it was in a very curious and characteristic attitude. I was hunting, again with an old mountain man as my sole companion, among the high mountains of the Kootenai country, near the border of Montana and British Columbia. We had left our main camp, pitched by the brink of the river, and were struggling wearily on foot through the tangled forest and over the precipitous mountains, carrying on our backs light packs, consisting of a little food and two or three indispensable utensils, wrapped in our blankets. One day we came to the foot of a great chain of bare rocks, and climbed laboriously to its crest, up cliff after cliff, some of which were almost perpendicular. Swarming round certain of the rock shoulders, crossing an occasional sheer chasm, and in many places clinging to steep, smooth walls by but slight holds, we reached the top. The climbing at such a height was excessively fatiguing; moreover, it was in places difficult and even dangerous. Of course it was not to be compared to the ascent of towering, glacier-bearing peaks, such as those of the Selkirks and Alaska, where climbers must be roped to one another and carry ice axes.

Once at the top we walked very cautiously,

being careful not to show ourselves against the sky line, and scanning the mountain sides through our glasses. At last we made out three goats, grazing unconcernedly on a narrow grassy terrace, which sloped abruptly to the brink of a high precipice. They were not very far off, and there was a little rock spur above them which offered good cover for a stalk; but we had to crawl so slowly, partly to avoid falling, and partly to avoid detaching loose rocks, that it was nearly an hour before we got in a favorable position above them, and some seventy yards off. The frost-disintegrated mountains in which they live are always sending down showers of detached stones, so that the goats are not very sensitive to this noise; still, they sometimes pay instantaneous heed to it, especially if the sound is repeated.

When I peeped over the little ridge of rock, shoving my rifle carefully ahead of me, I found that the goats had finished feeding and were preparing to leave the slope. The old billy saw me at once, but evidently could not quite make me out. Thereupon, gazing intently at me, he rose gravely on his haunches, sitting up almost in the attitude of a dog when begging. I know no other horned animal that ever takes this position.

As I fired he rolled backwards, slipped down the grassy slope, and tumbled over the brink of the cliff, while the other two, a she and a kid, after a moment's panic-struck pause, and a bewildered rush in the wrong direction, made off up a little rocky gully, and were out of sight in a moment. To my

chagrin when I finally reached the carcass, after a tedious and circuitous climb, to the foot of the cliff, I found both horns broken off.

It was late in the afternoon, and we clambered down to the border of a little marshy alpine lake, which we reached in an hour or so. Here we made our camp about sunset, in a grove of stunted spruces, which furnished plenty of dead timber for the fire. There were many white-goat trails leading to this lake, and from the slide rock roundabout we heard the shrill whistling of hoary rock-woodchucks, and the querulous notes of the little conies—two of the sounds most familiar to the white-goat hunter. These conies had gathered heaps of dried plants, and had stowed them carefully away for winter use in the cracks between the rocks.

While descending the mountain we came on a little pack of snow grouse or mountain ptarmigan, birds which, save in winter, are always found above timber line. They were tame and fearless, though hard to make out as they ran among the rocks, cackling noisily, with their tails cocked aloft; and we had no difficulty in killing four, which gave us a good breakfast and supper. Old white goats are intolerably musky in flavor, there being a very large musk-pod between the horn and ear. The kids are eatable, but of course are rarely killed; the shot being usually taken at the animal with best horns—and the shes and young of any game should only be killed when there is a real necessity.

These two hunts may be taken as samples

of most expeditions after white goat. There are places where the goats live in mountains close to bodies of water, either ocean fiords or large lakes; and in such places canoes can be used, to the greatly increased comfort and lessened labor of the hunters. In other places, where the mountains are low and the goats spend all the year in the timber, a pack-train can be taken right up to the hunting grounds. But generally one must go on foot, carrying everything on one's back, and at night lying out in the open or under a brush lean-to; meanwhile living on spruce grouse and ptarmigan, with an occasional meal of trout, and in times of scarcity squirrels, or anything else. Such a trip entails severe fatigue and not a little hardship. The actual hunting, also, implies difficult and laborious climbing, for the goats live by choice among the highest and most inaccessible mountains; though where they are found, as they sometimes are, in comparatively low forest-clad ranges, I have occasionally killed them with little trouble by lying in wait beside the well-trodden game trails they make in the timber.

In any event the hard work is to get up to the grounds where the game is found. Once the animals are spied there is but little call for the craft of the still-hunter in approaching them. Of all American game the white goat is the least wary and most stupid. In places where it is much hunted it of course gradually grows wilder and becomes difficult to approach and kill; and much of its silly tameness is doubtless due to the inaccessible nature of its haunts, which renders it ordina-

rily free from molestation; but aside from this it certainly seems as if it was naturally less wary than either deer or mountain sheep. The great point is to get above it. All its foes live in the valleys, and while it is in the mountains, if they strive to approach it at all, they must do so from below. It is in consequence always on the watch for danger from beneath; but it is easily approached from above, and then, as it generally tries to escape by running up hill, the hunter is very apt to get a shot.

Its chase is thus laborious rather than exciting; and to my mind it is less attractive than is the pursuit of most of our other game. Yet it has an attraction of its own after all; while the grandeur of the scenery amid which it must be carried on, the freedom and hardihood of the life and the pleasure of watching the queer habits of the game, all combine to add to the hunter's enjoyment.

White goats are self-confident, pugnacious beings. An old billy, if he discovers the presence of a foe without being quite sure what it is, often refuses to take flight, but walks around, stamping, and shaking his head. The needle-pointed black horns are alike in both sexes, save that the males' are a trifle thicker; and they are most effective weapons when wielded by the muscular neck of a resolute and wicked old goat. They wound like stilettos and their bearer is in consequence a much more formidable foe in a hand-to-hand struggle than either a branching-antlered deer or a mountain ram, with his great battering head. The goat does not

butt; he thrusts. If he can cover his back by a tree trunk or boulder he can stand off most carnivorous animals, no larger than he is.

Though awkward in movement, and lacking all semblance of lightness or agility, goats are excellent climbers. One of their queer traits is their way of getting their forehoofs on a slight ledge, and then drawing or lifting their bodies up by simple muscular exertion, stretching out their elbows, much as a man would. They do a good deal of their climbing by strength and command over their muscles; although they are also capable of making astonishing bounds. If a cliff surface has the least slope, and shows any inequalities or roughness whatever, goats can go up and down it with ease. With their short, stout legs, and large, sharp-edged hoofs they clamber well over ice, passing and repassing the mountains at a time when no man would so much as crawl over them. They bear extreme cold with indifference, but are intolerant of much heat; even when the weather is cool they are apt to take their noontide rest in caves; I have seen them solemnly retiring, for this purpose, to great rents in the rocks, at a time when my own teeth chattered because of the icy wind.

They go in small flocks; sometimes in pairs or little family parties. After the rut the bucks often herd by themselves, or go off alone, while the young and the shes keep together throughout the winter and the spring. The young are generally brought forth above timber line, or at its uppermost edge, save of course in those places where the goats

live among mountains wooded to the top. Throughout the summer they graze on the short mountain plants which in many places form regular mats above timber line; the deep winter snows drive them low down in the wooded valleys, and force them to subsist by browsing. They are so strong that they plough their way readily through deep drifts; and a flock of goats at this season, when their white coat is very long and thick, if seen waddling off through the snow, have a comical likeness to so many diminutive polar bears Of course they could easily be run down in the snow by a man on snowshoes, in the plain; but on a mountain side there are always bare rocks and cliff shoulders, glassy with winter ice, which give either goats or sheep an advantage over their snowshoe-bearing foes that deer and elk lack. Whenever the goats pass the winter in woodland they leave plenty of sign in the shape of patches of wool clinging to all the sharp twigs and branches against which they have brushed. In the spring they often form the habit of drinking at certain low pools, to which they beat deep paths; and at this season, and to a less extent in the summer and fall, they are very fond of frequenting mineral licks. At any such lick the ground is tramped bare of vegetation, and is filled with pits and hollows, actually dug by the tongues of innumerable generations of animals; while the game paths lead from them in a dozen directions.

In spite of the white goat's pugnacity, its clumsiness renders it no very difficult prey

when taken unawares by either wolf or cougar, its two chief enemies. They cannot often catch it when it is above timber line; but it is always in sore peril from them when it ventures into the forest. Bears, also, prey upon it in the early spring; and one midwinter my friend Willis found a wolverine eating a goat which it had killed in a snowdrift at the foot of a cliff. The savage little beast growled and showed fight when he came near the body. Eagles are great enemies of the young kids, as they are of the young lambs of the bighorn.

The white goat is the only game beast of America which has not decreased in numbers since the arrival of the white man. Although in certain localities it is now decreasing, yet, taken as a whole, it is probably quite as plentiful now as it was fifty years back; for in the early part of the present century there were Indian tribes who hunted it perseveringly to make the skins into robes, whereas now they get blankets from the traders and no longer persecute the goats. The early trappers and mountain-men knew but little of the animal. Whether they were after beaver, or were hunting big game, or were merely exploring, they kept to the valleys; there was no inducement for them to climb to the tops of the mountains; so it resulted that there was no animal with which the old hunters were so unfamiliar as with the white goat. The professional hunters of to-day likewise bother it but little; they do not care to undergo severe toil for an animal with worthless flesh and a hide of little value—for it is only in the late

fall and winter that the long hair and fine wool give the robe any beauty.

So the quaint, sturdy, musky beasts, with their queer and awkward ways, their boldness and their stupidity, with their white coats and big black hoofs, black muzzles, and sharp, gently-curved span-long black horns, have held their own well among the high mountains that they love. In the Rockies and the Coast ranges they abound from Alaska south to Montana, Idaho, and Washington; and here and there isolated colonies are found among the high mountains to the southward, in Wyoming, Colorado, even in New Mexico, and, strangest of all, in one or two spots among the barren coast mountains of southern California. Long after the elk has followed the buffalo to the happy hunting grounds the white goat will flourish among the towering and glacier-riven peaks, and, grown wary with succeeding generations, will furnish splendid sport to those hunters who are both good riflemen and hardy cragsmen.

CHAPTER VIII.

HUNTING IN THE SELKIRKS; THE CARIBOU.

IN September, 1888, I was camped on the shores of Kootenai Lake, having with me as companions, John Willis and an impassive-looking Indian named Ammál. Coming across through the dense coniferous forests of northern Idaho we had struck the Kootenai River. Then we went down with the current as it wound in half circles through a long alluvial valley of mixed marsh and woodland, hemmed in by lofty mountains. The lake itself, when we reached it, stretched straight away like a great fiord, a hundred miles long and about three in breadth. The frowning and rugged Selkirks came down sheer to the water's edge. So straight were the rock walls that it was difficult for us to land with our batteau, save at the places where the rapid mountain torrents entered the lake. As these streams of swift water broke from their narrow gorges they made little deltas of level ground, with beaches of fine white sand; and the stream-banks were edged with cottonwood and poplar, their shimmering foliage relieving the sombre coloring of the evergreen forest.

Close to such a brook, from which we drew strings of large silver trout, our tent was pitched, just within the forest. From be-

tween the trunks of two gnarled, wind-beaten trees, a pine and a cottonwood, we looked out across the lake. The little bay in our front, in which we bathed and swam, was sometimes glassily calm; and again heavy wind squalls arose, and the surf beat strongly on the beach where our boat was drawn up. Now and then great checker-back loons drifted buoyantly by, stopping with bold curiosity to peer at the white tent gleaming between the tree-trunks, and at the smoke curling above their tops; and they called to one another, both at dawn and in the daytime, with shrieks of unearthly laughter. Troops of noisy, parti-colored Clark's crows circled over the tree-tops or hung from among the pine cones; jays and chickadees came round camp, and woodpeckers hammered lustily in the dead timber. Two or three times parties of Indians passed down the lake, in strangely shaped bark canoes, with peaked, projecting prows and sterns; craft utterly unlike the graceful, feather-floating birches so beloved by both the red and the white woodsmen of the northeast. Once a couple of white men, in a dugout or pirogue made out of a cottonwood log, stopped to get lunch. They were mining prospectors, French Canadians by birth, but beaten into the usual frontier-mining stamp; doomed to wander their lives long, ever hoping, in the quest for metal wealth.

With these exceptions there was nothing to break the silent loneliness of the great lake. Shrouded as we were in the dense forest, and at the foot of the first steep hills, we could

see nothing of the country on the side where we were camped; but across the water the immense mountain masses stretched away from our vision, range upon range, until they turned to a glittering throng of ice peaks and snow fields, the feeding beds of glaciers. Between the lake and the snow range were chains of gray rock peaks, and the mountain sides and valleys were covered by the primeval forest. The woods were on fire across the lake from our camp, burning steadily. At night the scene was very grand, as the fire worked slowly across the mountain sides in immense zigzags of quivering red; while at times isolated pines of unusual size kindled, and flamed for hours, like the torches of a giant. Finally the smoke grew so thick as to screen from our views the grand landscape opposite.

We had come down from a week's fruitless hunting in the mountains; a week of excessive toil, in a country where we saw no game—for in our ignorance we had wasted time, not going straight back to the high ranges, from which the game had not yet descended. After three or four days of rest, and of feasting on trout—a welcome relief to the monotony of frying-pan bread and coarsey salt pork—we were ready for another trial; and early one morning we made the start. Having to pack everything for a fortnight's use on our backs, through an excessively rough country we of course travelled as light as possible, leaving almost all we had with the tent and boat. Each took his own blanket; and among us we carried a frying-pan, a teapot, flour, pork,

salt, tea, and matches. I also took a jacket, a spare pair of socks, some handkerchiefs, and my washing kit. Fifty cartridges in my belt completed my outfit.

We walked in single file, as is necessary in thick woods. The white hunter led and I followed, each with rifle on shoulder and pack on back. Ammál, the Indian, pigeon-toed along behind, carrying his pack, not as we did ours, but by help of a forehead-band, which he sometimes shifted across his breast. The travelling through the tangled, brush-choked forest, and along the boulder-strewn and precipitous mountain sides, was inconceivably rough and difficult. In places we followed the valley, and when this became impossible we struck across the spurs. Every step was severe toil. Now we walked through deep moss and rotting mould, every few feet clambering over huge trunks; again we pushed through a stiff jungle of bushes and tall, prickly plants—called "devil's clubs,"—which stung our hands and faces. Up the almost perpendicular hill-sides we in many places went practically on all fours, forcing our way over the rocks and through the dense thickets of laurels or young spruce. Where there were windfalls or great stretches of burnt forest, black and barren wastes, we balanced and leaped from log to log, sometimes twenty or thirty feet above the ground; and when such a stretch was on a steep hill-side, and especially if the logs were enveloped in a thick second growth of small evergreens, the footing was very insecure, and the danger from a fall considerable. Our packs added greatly to our labor,

catching on the snags and stubs; and where a grove of thick-growing young spruces or a balsams had been burned, the stiff and brittle twigs pricked like so much coral. Most difficult of all were the dry water-courses, choked with alders, where the intertwined tangle of tough stems formed an almost literally impenetrable barrier to our progress. Nearly every movement—leaping, climbing, swinging one's self up with one's hands, bursting through stiff bushes, plunging into and out of bogs—was one of strain and exertion; the fatigue was tremendous, and steadily continued, so that in an hour every particle of clothing I had on was wringing wet with sweat.

At noon we halted beside a little brook for a bite of lunch—a chunk of cold frying-pan bread, which was all we had.

While at lunch I made a capture. I was sitting on a great stone by the edge of the brook, idly gazing at a water-wren which had come up from a short flight—I can call it nothing else—underneath the water, and was singing sweetly from a spray-splashed log. Suddenly a small animal swam across the little pool at my feet. It was less in size than a mouse, and as it paddled rapidly underneath the water its body seemed flattened like a disc and was spangled with tiny bubbles, like specks of silver. It was a water-shrew, a rare little beast. I sat motionless and watched both the shrew and the water-wren—water-ousel, as it should rightly be named. The latter, emboldened by my quiet, presently flew by me to a little rapids close at hand, lighting on a round stone, and then slipping un-

concernedly into the swift water. Anon he emerged, stood on another stone, and trilled a few bars, though it was late in the season for singing; and then dove again into the stream. I gazed at him eagerly; for this strange, pretty water-thrush is to me one of the most attractive and interesting birds to be found in the gorges of the great Rockies. Its haunts are romantically beautiful, for it always dwells beside and in the swift-flowing mountain brooks; it has a singularly sweet song; and its ways render it a marked bird at once, for though looking much like a sober-colored, ordinary woodland thrush, it spends half its time under the water, walking along the bottom, swimming and diving, and flitting through as well as over the cataracts.

In a minute or two the shrew caught my eye again. It got into a little shallow eddy and caught a minute fish, which it carried to a half-sunken stone and greedily devoured, tugging voraciously at it as it held it down with its paws. Then its evil genius drove it into a small puddle alongside the brook, where I instantly pounced on and slew it; for I knew a friend in the Smithsonian at Washington who would have coveted it greatly. It was a soft, pretty creature, dark above, snow-white below, with a very long tail. I turned the skin inside out and put a bent twig in, that it might dry; while Ammál, who had been intensely interested in the chase and capture, meditatively shook his head and said "wagh," unable to fathom the white man's medicine. However, my labor came to nought, for that evening I laid the skin out on

a log, Ammál threw the log into the fire, and that was the end of the shrew.

When this interlude was over we resumed our march, toiling silently onwards through the wild and rugged country. Towards evening the valley widened a little, and we were able to walk in the bottoms, which much lightened our labor. The hunter, for greater ease, had tied the thongs of his heavy pack across his breast, so that he could not use his rifle; but my pack was lighter, and I carried it in a manner that would not interfere with my shooting, lest we should come unawares on game.

It was well that I did so. An hour or two before sunset we were travelling, as usual, in Indian file, beside the stream, through an open wood of great hemlock trees. There was no breeze, and we made no sound as we marched, for our feet sunk noiselessly into the deep sponge of moss, while the incessant dashing of the torrent, churning among the stones, would have drowned a far louder advance.

Suddenly the hunter, who was leading, dropped down in his tracks, pointing forward; and some fifty feet beyond I saw the head and shoulders of a bear as he rose to make a sweep at some berries. He was in a hollow where a tall, rank, prickly plant, with broad leaves, grew luxuriantly; and he was gathering its red berries, rising on his hind legs and sweeping them down into his mouth with his paw, and was much too intent on his work to notice us, for his head was pointed the other way. The moment he rose again I fired,

meaning to shoot through the shoulders, but instead, in the hurry, taking him in the neck. Down he went, but whether hurt or not we could not see, for the second he was on all fours he was no longer visible. Rather to my surprise he uttered no sound—for bear when hit or when charging often make a great noise—so I raced forward to the edge of the hollow, the hunter close behind me, while Ammál danced about in the rear, very much excited, as Indians always are in the presence of big game. The instant we reached the hollow and looked down into it from the low bank on which we stood we saw by the swaying of the tall plants that the bear was coming our way. The hunter was standing some ten feet distant, a hemlock trunk being between us; and the next moment the bear sprang clean up the bank the other side of the hemlock, and almost within arm's length of my companion. I do not think he had intended to charge; he was probably confused by the bullet through his neck, and had by chance blundered out of the hollow in our direction; but when he saw the hunter so close he turned for him, his hair bristling and his teeth showing. The man had no cartridge in his weapon, and with his pack on could not have used it anyhow; and for a moment it looked as if he stood a fair chance of being hurt, though it is not likely that the bear would have done more than knock him down with his powerful forepaw, or perchance give him a single bite in passing. However, as the beast sprang out of the hollow he poised for a second on the edge of the bank to recover

his balance, giving me a beautiful shot, as he stood sideways to me; the bullet struck between the eye and ear, and he fell as if hit with a pole axe.

Immediately the Indian began jumping about the body, uttering wild yells, his usually impassive face lit up with excitement, while the hunter and I stood at rest, leaning on our rifles and laughing. It was a strange scene, the dead bear lying in the shade of the giant hemlocks, while the fantastic-looking savage danced round him with shrill whoops, and the tall frontiersman looked quietly on.

Our prize was a large black bear, with two curious brown streaks down his back, one on each side the spine. We skinned him and camped by the carcass, as it was growing late. To take the chill off the evening air we built a huge fire, the logs roaring and crackling. To one side of it we made our beds—of balsam and hemlock boughs; we did not build a brush lean-to, because the night seemed likely to be clear. Then we supped on sugarless tea, frying-pan bread, and quantities of bear meat, fried or roasted —and how very good it tasted only those know who have gone through much hardship and some little hunger, and have worked violently for several days without flesh food. After eating our fill we stretched ourselves around the fire; the leaping sheets of flame lit the tree-trunks round about, causing them to start out against the cavernous blackness beyond, and reddened the interlacing branches that formed a canopy overhead. The Indian sat on his haunches, gazing steadily and

silently into the pile of blazing logs, while the white hunter and I talked together.

The morning after killing Bruin, we again took up our march, heading up stream, that we might go to its sources amidst the mountains, where the snow fields fed its springs. It was two full days' journey thither, but we took much longer to make it, as we kept halting to hunt the adjoining mountains. On such occasions Ammál was left as camp guard, while the white hunter and I would start by daybreak and return at dark utterly worn out by the excessive fatigue. We knew nothing of caribou, nor where to hunt for them; and we had been told that thus early in the season they were above tree limit on the mountain sides. Accordingly we would climb up to the limits of the forests, but never found a caribou trail; and once or twice we went on to the summits of the crag-peaks, and across the deep snow fields in the passes. There were plenty of white goats, however, their trails being broad paths, especially at one spot where they led down to a lick in the valley; round the lick, for a space of many yards, the ground was trampled as if in a sheepfold.

The mountains were very steep, and the climbing was in places dangerous, when we were above the timber and had to make our way along the jagged knife-crests and across the faces of the cliffs; while our hearts beat as if about to burst in the high, thin air. In walking over rough but not dangerous ground —across slides or in thick timber—my companion was far more skilful than I was; but

rather to my surprise I proved to be nearly as good as he when we came to the really dangerous places, where we had to go slowly, and let one another down from ledge to ledge, or crawl by narrow cracks across the rock walls.

The view from the summits was magnificent, and I never tired of gazing at it. Sometimes the sky was a dome of blue crystal, and mountain, lake, and valley lay spread in startling clearness at our very feet; and again snow-peak and rock-peak were thrust up like islands through a sea of billowy clouds. At the feet of the topmost peaks, just above the edge of the forest, were marshy alpine valleys, the boggy ground soaked with water, and small bushes or stunted trees fringing the icy lakes. In the stony mountain sides surrounding these lakes there were hoary woodchucks, and conies. The former resembled in their habits the alpine marmot, rather than our own common eastern woodchuck. They lived alone or in couples among the rocks, their gray color often making them difficult to see as they crouched at the mouths of their burrows, or sat bolt upright; and as an alarm note they uttered a loud piercing whistle, a strong contrast to the querulous, plaintive "p-a-a-y" of the timid conies. These likewise loved to dwell where the stones and slabs of rock were heaped on one another; though so timid, they were not nearly as wary as the woodchucks. If we stood quite still the little brown creatures would venture away from their holes and hop softly over the rocks as if we were not present.

The white goats were too musky to eat, and we saw nothing else to shoot; so we speedily became reduced to tea, and to bread baked in the frying-pan, save every now and then for a feast on the luscious mountain blueberries. This rather meagre diet, coupled with incessant fatigue and exertion, made us fairly long for meat food; and we fell off in flesh, though of course in so short a time we did not suffer in either health or strength. Fortunately the nights were too cool for mosquitoes; but once or twice in the afternoons, while descending the lower slopes of the mountains, we were much bothered by swarms of gnats; they worried us greatly, usually attacking us at a time when we had to go fast in order to reach camp before dark, while the roughness of the ground forced us to use both hands in climbing, and thus forbade us to shield our faces from our tiny tormentors. Our chief luxury was, at the end of the day, when footsore and weary, to cast aside our sweat-drenched clothes and plunge into the icy mountain torrent for a moment's bath that freshened us as if by magic. The nights were generally pleasant, and we slept soundly on our beds of balsam boughs, but once or twice there were sharp frosts, and it was so cold that the hunter and I huddled together for warmth and kept the fires going till morning. One day, when we were on the march, it rained heavily, and we were soaked through, and stiff and chilly when we pitched camp: but we speedily built a great brush lean-to, made a roaring fire in front, and grew once more to warmth and comfort as we sat under our steaming shelter.

The only discomfort we really minded was an occasional night in wet blankets.

In the evening the Indian and the white hunter played interminable games of seven-up with a greasy pack of cards. In the course of his varied life the hunter had been a professional gambler; and he could have easily won all the Indian's money, the more speedily inasmuch as the untutored red man was always attempting to cheat, and was thus giving his far more skilful opponent a certain right to try some similar deviltry in return. However, it was distinctly understood that there should be no gambling, for I did not wish Ammál to lose all his wages while in my employ; and the white man stood loyally by his agreement. Ammál's people, just before I engaged him, had been visited by their brethren, the Upper Kootenais, and in a series of gambling matches had lost about all their belongings.

Ammál himself was one of the Lower Kootenais; I had hired him for the trip, as the Indians west of the Rockies, unlike their kinsmen of the plains, often prove hard and willing workers. His knowledge of English was almost nil; and our very scanty conversation was carried on in the Chinook jargon, universally employed between the mountains and the Pacific. Apparently he had three names: for he assured us that his "Boston" (*i. e.*, American) name was Ammál; his "Siwash" (*i. e.*, Indian) name was Appák; and that the priest called him Abél—for the Lower Kootenais are nominally Catholics. Whatever his name he was a good Indian, as

Indians go. I often tried to talk with him about game and hunting, but we understood each other too little to exchange more than the most rudimentary ideas. His face brightened one night when I happened to tell him of my baby boys at home; he must have been an affectionate father in his way, this dark Ammál, for he at once proceeded to tell me about his own papoose, who had also seen one snow, and to describe how the little fellow was old enough to take one step and then fall down. But he never displayed so much vivacity as on one occasion when the white hunter happened to relate to him a rather gruesome feat of one of their mutual acquaintances, an Upper Kootenai Indian named Three Coyotes. The latter was a quarrelsome, adventurous Indian, with whom the hunter had once had a difficulty—"I had to beat the cuss over the head with my gun a little," he remarked parenthetically. His last feat had been done in connection with a number of Chinamen who had been working among some placer mines, where the Indians came to visit them. Now the astute Chinese are as fond of gambling as any of the borderers, white or red, and are very successful, generally fleecing the Indians unmercifully. Three Coyotes lost all he possessed to one of the pigtailed gentry; but he apparently took his losses philosophically, and pleasantly followed the victor round, until the latter had won all the cash and goods of several other Indians. Then he suddenly fell on the exile from the Celestial Empire, slew him and took all his plunder, retiring unmolested, as it did

not seem any one's business to avenge a mere Chinaman. Ammál was immensely interested in the tale, and kept recurring to it again and again, taking two little sticks and making the hunter act out the whole story. The Kootenais were then only just beginning to consider the Chinese as human. They knew they must not kill white people, and they had their own code of morality among themselves; but when the Chinese first appeared they evidently thought that there could not be any especial objection to killing them, if any reason arose for doing so. I think the hunter himself sympathized somewhat with this view.

Ammál objected strongly to leaving the neighborhood of the lake. He went the first day's journey willingly enough, but after that it was increasingly difficult to get him along, and he gradually grew sulky. For some time we could not find out the reason; but finally he gave us to understand that he was afraid because up in the high mountains there were "little bad Indians" who would kill him if they caught him alone, especially at night. At first we thought he was speaking of stray warriors of the Blackfeet tribe; but it turned out that he was not thinking of human beings at all, but of hobgoblins.

Indeed the night sounds of these great stretches of mountain woodland were very weird and strange. Though I have often and for long periods dwelt and hunted in the wilderness, yet I never before so well understood why the people who live in lonely forest regions are prone to believe in elves, wood spirits, and other beings of an unseen world.

Our last camp, whereat we spent several days, was pitched in a deep valley nearly at the head of the stream. Our brush shelter stood among the tall coniferous trees that covered the valley bottom; but the altitude was so great that the forest extended only a very short distance up the steep mountain slopes. Beyond, on either hand, rose walls of gray rock, with snow beds in their rifts, and, high above, toward the snow peaks, the great white fields dazzled the eyes. The torrent foamed swiftly by but a short distance below the mossy level space on which we had built our slight weather-shield of pine boughs; other streams poured into it, from ravines through which they leaped down the mountain sides.

After nightfall, round the camp fire, or if I awakened after sleeping a little while, I would often lie silently for many minutes together, listening to the noises of the wilderness. At times the wind moaned harshly through the tops of the tall pines and hemlocks: at times the branches were still; but the splashing murmur of the torrent never ceased, and through it came other sounds—the clatter of huge rocks falling down the cliffs, the dashing of cataracts in far-off ravines, the hooting of owls. Again, the breeze would shift, and bring to my ears the ringing of other brooks and cataracts and wind-stirred forests, and perhaps at long intervals the cry of some wild beast, the crash of a falling tree, or the faint rumble of a snow avalanche. If I listened long enough, it would almost seem that I heard thunderous voices laughing and calling to one another, and as if at any moment some

shape might stalk out of the darkness into the dim light of the embers.

Until within a couple of days of turning our faces back towards the lake we did not come across any caribou, and saw but a few old signs; and we began to be fearful lest we should have to return without getting any, for our shoes had been cut to ribbons by the sharp rocks, we were almost out of flour, and therefore had but little to eat. However, our perseverance was destined to be rewarded.

The first day after reaching our final camp, we hunted across a set of spurs and hollows but saw nothing living; yet we came across several bear tracks, and in a deep, mossy quagmire, by a spring, found where a huge silver-tip had wallowed only the night before.

Next day we started early, determined to take a long walk and follow the main stream up to its head, or at least above timber line. The hunter struck so brisk a pace, plunging through thickets and leaping from log to log in the slashes of fallen timber, and from boulder to boulder in crossing the rock-slides, that I could hardly keep up to him, struggle as I would, and we each of us got several ugly tumbles, saving our rifles at the expense of scraped hands and bruised bodies. We went up one side of the stream, intending to come down the other; for the forest belt was narrow enough to hunt thoroughly. For two or three hours we toiled through dense growth, varied by rock-slides, and once or twice by marshy tracts, where water oozed and soaked through the mossy hillsides, studded rather sparsely with evergreens. In one of these

places we caught a glimpse of an animal which the track showed to be a wolverine.

Then we came to a spur of open hemlock forest; and no sooner had we entered it than the hunter stopped and pointed exultingly to a well-marked game trail, in which it was easy at a glance to discern the great round footprints of our quarry. We hunted carefully over the spur and found several trails, generally leading down along the ridge; we also found a number of beds, some old and some recent, usually placed where the animal could keep a lookout for any foe coming up from the valley. They were merely slight hollows or indentations in the pine-needles; and, like the game trails, were placed in localities similar to those that would be chosen by blacktail deer. The caribou droppings were also very plentiful; and there were signs of where they had browsed on the blueberry bushes, cropping off the berries, and also apparently of where they had here and there plucked a mouthful of a peculiar kind of moss, or cropped off some little mushrooms. But the beasts themselves had evidently left the hemlock ridge, and we went on.

We were much pleased at finding the sign in open timber, where the ground was excellent for still-hunting; for in such thick forest as we had passed through, it would have been by mere luck only that we could have approached game.

After a little while the valley became so high that the large timber ceased, and there were only occasional groves of spindling evergreens. Beyond the edge of the big timber

was a large boggy tract, studded with little pools; and here again we found plenty of caribou tracks. A caribou has an enormous foot, bigger than a cow's, and admirably adapted for travelling over snow or bogs; hence they can pass through places where the long slender hoofs of moose or deer, or the round hoofs of elk, would let their owners sink at once; and they are very difficult to kill by following on snow-shoes—a method much in vogue among the brutal game butchers for slaughtering the more helpless animals. Spreading out his great hoofs, and bending his legs till he walks almost on the joints, a caribou will travel swiftly over a crust through which a moose breaks at every stride, or through deep snow in which a deer cannot flounder fifty yards. Usually he trots; but when pressed he will spring awkwardly along, leaving tracks in the snow almost exactly like magnified imprints of those of a great rabbit, the long marks of the two hind legs forming an angle with each other, while the forefeet make a large point almost between.

The caribou had wandered all over the bogs and through the shallow pools, but evidently only at night or in the dusk, when feeding or in coming to drink; and we again went on. Soon the timber disappeared almost entirely, and thick brushwood took its place; we were in a high, bare alpine valley, the snow lying in drifts along the sides. In places there had been enormous rock-slides, entirely filling up the bottom, so that for a quarter of a mile at a stretch the stream ran underground. In

the rock masses of this alpine valley we, as usual, saw many conies and hoary woodchucks.

The caribou trails had ceased, and it was evident that the beasts were not ahead of us in the barren, treeless recesses between the mountains of rock and snow; and we turned back down the valley, crossing over to the opposite or south side of the stream. We had already eaten our scanty lunch, for it was afternoon. For several miles of hard walking, through thicket, marsh, and rock-slide, we saw no traces of the game. Then we reached the forest, which soon widened out, and crept up the mountain sides; and we came to where another stream entered the one we were following. A high, steep shoulder between the two valleys was covered with an open growth of great hemlock timber, and in this we again found the trails and beds plentiful. There was no breeze, and after beating through the forest nearly to its upper edge, we began to go down the ridge, or point of the shoulder. The comparative freedom from brushwood made it easy to walk without noise, and we descended the steep incline with the utmost care, scanning every object, and using every caution not to slip on the hemlock needles, nor to strike a stone or break a stick with our feet. The sign was very fresh, and when still half a mile or so from the bottom we at last came on three bull caribou.

Instantly the hunter crouched down, while I ran noiselessly forward behind the shelter of a big hemlock trunk until within fifty yards

of the grazing and unconscious quarry. They were feeding with their heads up-hill, but so greedily that they had not seen us; and they were rather difficult to see themselves, for their bodies harmonized well in color with the brown tree-trunks and lichen-covered boulders. The largest, a big bull with a good but by no means extraordinary head, was nearest. As he stood fronting me with his head down I fired into his neck, breaking the bone, and he turned a tremendous back somersault. The other two halted a second in stunned terror; then one, a yearling, rushed past us up the valley down which we had come, while the other, a large bull with small antlers, crossed right in front of me, at a canter, his neck thrust out, and his head—so coarse-looking compared to the delicate outlines of an elk's—turned towards me. His movements seemed clumsy and awkward, utterly unlike those of a deer; but he handled his great hoofs cleverly enough, and broke into a headlong, rattling gallop as he went down the hillside, crashing through the saplings and leaping over the fallen logs. There was a spur a little beyond, and up this he went at a swinging trot, halting when he reached the top, and turning to look at me once more. He was only a hundred yards away; and though I had not intended to shoot him (for his head was not good), the temptation was sore; and I was glad when, in another second, the stupid beast turned again and went off up the valley at a slashing run.

Then we hurried down to examine with pride and pleasure the dead bull—his massive form,

sleek coat, and fine antlers. It was one of those moments that repay the hunter for days of toil and hardship; that is if he needs repayment, and does not find life in the wilderness pleasure enough in itself.

It was getting late, and if we expected to reach camp that night it behooved us not to delay; so we merely halted long enough to dress the caribou, and take a steak with us—which we did not need, by the way, for almost immediately we came on a band of spruce grouse and knocked off the heads of five with our rifles. The caribou's stomach was filled with blueberries, and with their leaves, and with a few small mushrooms also, and some mouthfuls of moss. We went home very fast, too much elated to heed scratches and tumbles; and just as it was growing so dark that further travelling was impossible we came opposite our camp, crossed the river on a fallen hemlock, and walked up to the moody Indian, as he sat crouched by the fire.

He lost his sullenness when he heard what we had done; and next day we all went up and skinned and butchered the caribou, returning to camp and making ready to start back to the lake the following morning; and that night we feasted royally.

We were off by dawn, the Indian joyfully leading. Coming up into the mountains he had always been the rear man of the file; but now he went first and struck a pace that, continued all day long, gave me a little trouble to follow. Each of us carried his pack; to the Indian's share fell the caribou skull and antlers, which he bore on his head. At the end

of the day he confessed to me that it had made his head "heap sick"—as well it might. We had made four short days', or parts of days' march coming up; for we had stopped to hunt, and moreover we knew nothing of the country, being probably the first white men in it, while none of the Indians had ever ventured a long distance from the lake. Returning we knew how to take the shortest route, we were going down hill, and we walked or trotted very fast; and so we made the whole distance in twelve hours' travel. At sunset we came out on the last range of steep foot-hills, overlooking the cove where we had pitched our permanent camp; and from a bare cliff shoulder we saw our boat on the beach, and our white tent among the trees, just as we had left them, while the glassy mirror of the lake reflected the outlines of the mountains opposite.

Though this was the first caribou I had ever killed, it was by no means the first I had ever hunted. Among my earliest hunting experiences, when a lad, were two fruitless and toilsome expeditions after caribou in the Maine woods. One I made in the fall, going to the head of the Munsungin River in a pirogue, with one companion. The water was low, and all the way up we had to drag the pirogue, wet to our middles, our ankles sore from slipping on the round stones under the rushing water, and our muscles aching with fatigue. When we reached the head-waters we found no caribou sign, and came back without slaying anything larger than an infrequent duck or grouse.

The following February I made a trip on snow-shoes after the same game, and with the same result. However, I enjoyed the trip, for the northland woods are very beautiful and strange in winter, as indeed they are at all other times—and it was my first experience on snow-shoes. I used the ordinary webbed racquets, and as the snow, though very deep, was only imperfectly crusted, I found that for a beginner the exercise was laborious in the extreme, speedily discovering that, no matter how cold it was, while walking through the windless woods I stood in no need of warm clothing. But at night, especially when lying out, the cold was bitter. Our plan was to drive in a sleigh to some logging camp, where we were always received with hearty hospitality, and thence make hunting trips, in very light marching order, through the heart of the surrounding forest. The woods, wrapped in their heavy white mantle, were still and lifeless. There were a few chickadees and woodpeckers; now and then we saw flocks of redpolls, pine linnets, and large, rosy grossbeaks; and once or twice I came across a grouse or white rabbit, and killed it for supper; but this was nearly all. Yet, though bird life was scarce, and though we saw few beasts beyond an occasional porcupine or squirrel, every morning the snow was dotted with a network of trails made during the hours of darkness; the fine tracery of the footprints of the little red wood-mouse, the marks which showed the loping progress of the sable, the V and dot of the rabbit, the round pads of the lucivee, and many others. The snow reveals, as nothing

else does, the presence in the forest of the many shy woodland creatures which lead their lives abroad only after nightfall. Once we saw a coon, out early after its winter nap, and following I shot it in a hollow tree. Another time we came on a deer and the frightened beast left its "yard," a tangle of beaten paths, or deep furrows. The poor animal made but slow headway through the powdery snow; after going thirty or forty rods it sank exhausted in a deep drift, and lay there in helpless panic as we walked close by. Very different were the actions of the only caribou we saw—a fine beast which had shed its antlers. I merely caught a glimpse of it as it leaped over a breast-work of down timbers; and we never saw it again. Alternately trotting and making a succession of long jumps, it speedily left us far behind; with its great splay-hoofs it could snow-shoe better than we could. It is among deer the true denizen of the regions of heavy snowfall; far more so than the moose. Only under exceptional conditions of crust-formation is it in any danger from a man on snow-shoes.

In other ways it is no better able to take care of itself than moose and deer; in fact I doubt whether its senses are quite as acute, or at least whether it is as wary and knowing, for under like conditions it is rather easier to still-hunt. In the fall caribou wander long distances, and are fond of frequenting the wet barrens which break the expanse of the northern forest in tracts of ever increasing size as the subarctic regions are neared. At this time they go in bands, each under the

control of a master bull, which wages repeated and furious battles for his harem; and in their ways of life they resemble the wapiti more than they do the moose or deer. They sometimes display a curious boldness, the bulls especially showing both stupidity and pugnacity when in districts to which men rarely penetrate.

On our way out of the woods, after this hunt, there was a slight warm spell, followed by rain and then by freezing weather, so as to bring about what is known as a silver thaw. Every twig was sheathed in glittering ice, and in the moonlight the forest gleamed as if carved out of frosted silver.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WAPITI OR ROUND-HORNED ELK.

ONCE, while on another hunt with John Willis, I spent a week in a vain effort to kill moose among the outlying mountains at the southern end of the Bitter Root range. Then, as we had no meat, we determined to try for elk, of which we had seen much sign.

We were camped with a wagon, as high among the foot-hills as wheels could go, but several hours' walk from the range of the game; for it was still early in the season, and they had not yet come down from the upper slopes. Accordingly we made a practice of leaving the wagon for two or three days at a time to hunt; returning to get a night's rest in the tent, preparatory to a fresh start. On these trips we carried neither blankets nor packs, as the walking was difficult and we had much ground to cover. Each merely put on his jacket with a loaf of frying-pan bread and a paper of salt stuffed into the pockets. We were cumbered with nothing save our rifles and cartridges.

On the morning in question we left camp at sunrise. For two or three hours we walked up-hill through a rather open growth of small pines and spruces, the travelling being easy.

Then we came to the edge of a deep valley, a couple of miles across. Into this we scrambled, down a steep slide, where the forest had grown up among the immense boulder masses. The going here was difficult to a degree; the great rocks, dead timber, slippery pine needles, and loose gravel entailing caution at every step, while we had to guard our rifles carefully from the consequences of a slip. It was not much better at the bottom, which was covered by a tangled mass of swampy forest. Through this we hunted carefully, but with no success, in spite of our toil; for the only tracks we saw that were at all fresh were those of a cow and calf moose. Finally, in the afternoon, we left the valley and began to climb a steep gorge, down which a mountain torrent roared and foamed in a succession of cataracts.

Three hours' hard climbing brought us to another valley, but of an entirely different character. It was several miles long, but less than a mile broad. Save at the mouth, it was walled in completely by chains of high rock-peaks, their summits snow-capped; the forest extended a short distance up their sides. The bottom of the valley was in places covered by open woodland, elsewhere by marshy meadows, dotted with dense groves of spruce.

Hardly had we entered this valley before we caught a glimpse of a yearling elk walking rapidly along a game path some distance ahead. We followed as quickly as we could without making a noise, but after the first glimpse never saw it again; for it is astonishing how fast an elk travels, with its ground-

covering walk. We went up the valley until we were well past its middle, and saw abundance of fresh elk sign. Evidently two or three bands had made the neighborhood their headquarters. Among them were some large bulls, which had been trying their horns not only on the quaking-asp and willow saplings, but also on one another, though the rut had barely begun. By one pool they had scooped out a kind of a wallow or bare spot in the grass, and had torn and tramped the ground with their hoofs. The place smelt strongly of their urine.

By the time the sun set we were sure the elk were towards the head of the valley. We utilized the short twilight in arranging our sleeping place for the night, choosing a thick grove of spruce beside a small mountain tarn, at the foot of a great cliff. We were chiefly influenced in our choice by the abundance of dead timber of a size easy to handle; the fuel question being all-important on such a trip, where one has to lie out without bedding, and to keep up a fire, with no axe to cut wood.

Having selected a smooth spot, where some low-growing firs made a wind break, we dragged up enough logs to feed the fire throughout the night. Then we drank our fill at the icy pool, and ate a few mouthfuls of bread. While it was still light we heard the querulous bleat of the conies, from among the slide rocks at the foot of the mountain; and the chipmunks and chickarees scolded at us. As dark came on, and we sat silently gazing into the flickering blaze, the owls began muttering and hooting.

Clearing the ground of stones and sticks, we lay down beside the fire, pulled our soft felt hats over our ears, buttoned our jackets, and went to sleep. Of course our slumbers were fitful and broken, for every hour or two the fire got low and had to be replenished. We wakened shivering out of each spell of restless sleep to find the logs smouldering; we were alternately scorched and frozen.

As the first faint streak of dawn appeared in the dark sky my companion touched me lightly on the arm. The fire was nearly out; we felt numbed by the chill air. At once we sprang up, stretched our arms, shook ourselves, examined our rifles, swallowed a mouthful or two of bread, and walked off through the gloomy forest.

At first we could scarcely see our way, but it grew rapidly lighter. The gray mist rose and wavered over the pools and wet places; the morning voices of the wilderness began to break the death-like stillness. After we had walked a couple of miles the mountain tops on our right hand reddened in the sunrays.

Then, as we trod noiselessly over the dense moss, and on the pine needles under the scattered trees, we heard a sharp clang and clatter up the valley ahead of us. We knew this meant game of some sort; and stealing lightly and cautiously forward we soon saw before us the cause of the noise.

In a little glade, a hundred and twenty-five yards from us, two bull elk were engaged in deadly combat, while two others were looking on. It was a splendid sight. The great

beasts faced each other with lowered horns, the manes that covered their thick necks, and the hair on their shoulders, bristling and erect. Then they charged furiously, the crash of the meeting antlers resounding through the valley. The shock threw them both on their haunches; with locked horns and glaring eyes they strove against each other, getting their hind legs well under them, straining every muscle in their huge bodies, and squealing savagely. They were evenly matched in weight, strength, and courage; and push as they might, neither got the upper hand, first one yielding a few inches, then the other, while they swayed to and fro in their struggles, smashing the bushes and ploughing up the soil.

Finally they separated and stood some little distance apart, under the great pines; their sides heaving, and columns of steam rising from their nostrils through the frosty air of the brightening morning. Again they rushed together with a crash, and each strove mightily to overthrow the other, or get past his guard; but the branching antlers caught every vicious lunge and thrust. This set-to was stopped rather curiously. One of the onlooking elk was a yearling; the other, though scarcely as heavy-bodied as either of the fighters, had a finer head. He was evidently much excited by the battle, and he now began to walk towards the two combatants, nodding his head and uttering a queer, whistling noise. They dared not leave their flanks uncovered to his assault; and as he approached they promptly separated, and walked off side by side a few yards apart. In a moment, however, one

spun round and jumped at his old adversary, seeking to stab him in his unprotected flank; but the latter was just as quick, and as before caught the rush on his horns. They closed as furiously as ever; but the utmost either could do was to inflict one or two punches on the neck and shoulders of his foe, where the thick hide served as a shield. Again the peace-maker approached, nodding his head, whistling, and threatening; and again they separated.

This was repeated once or twice; and I began to be afraid lest the breeze which was very light and puffy should shift and give them my wind. So, resting my rifle on my knee I fired twice, putting one bullet behind the shoulder of the peace-maker, and the other behind the shoulder of one of the combatants. Both were deadly shots, but, as so often with wapiti, neither of the wounded animals at the moment showed any signs of being hit. The yearling ran off unscathed. The other three crowded together and trotted behind some spruce on the left, while we ran forward for another shot. In a moment one fell; whereupon the remaining two turned and came back across the glade, trotting to the right. As we opened fire they broke into a lumbering gallop, but were both downed before they got out of sight in the timber.

As soon as the three bulls were down we busied ourselves taking off their heads and hides, and cutting off the best portions of the meat—from the saddles and hams—to take back to camp, where we smoked it. But first we had breakfast. We kindled a fire beside

a little spring of clear water and raked out the coals. Then we cut two willow twigs as spits, ran on each a number of small pieces of elk loin, and roasted them over the fire. We had salt; we were very hungry; and I never ate anything that tasted better.

The wapiti is, next to the moose, the most quarrelsome and pugnacious of American deer. It cannot be said that it is ordinarily a dangerous beast to hunt; yet there are instances in which wounded wapiti, incautiously approached to within striking distance, have severely misused their assailants, both with their antlers and their forefeet. I myself knew one man who had been badly mauled in this fashion. When tamed the bulls are dangerous to human life in the rutting season. In a grapple they are of course infinitely more to be dreaded than ordinary deer, because of their great strength.

However, the fiercest wapiti bull, when in a wild state, flees the neighborhood of man with the same panic terror shown by the cows; and he makes no stand against a grisly, though when his horns are grown he has little fear of either wolf or cougar if on his guard and attacked fairly. The chief battles of the bulls are of course waged with one another. Before the beginning of the rut they keep by themselves: singly, while the sprouting horns are still very young, at which time they lie in secluded spots and move about as little as possible; in large bands, later in the season. At the beginning of the fall these bands join with one another and with the bands of cows and calves, which have likewise been keeping

to themselves during the late winter, the spring, and the summer. Vast herds are thus sometimes formed, containing, in the old days when wapiti were plenty, thousands of head. The bulls now begin to fight furiously with one another, and the great herd becomes split into smaller ones. Each of these has one master bull, who has won his position by savage battle, and keeps it by overcoming every rival, whether a solitary bull, or the lord of another harem, who challenges him. When not fighting or love-making he is kept on the run, chasing away the young bulls who venture to pay court to the cows. He has hardly time to eat or sleep, and soon becomes gaunt and worn to a degree. At the close of the rut many of the bulls become so emaciated that they retire to some secluded spot to recuperate. They are so weak that they readily succumb to the elements, or to their brute foes; many die from sheer exhaustion.

The battles between the bulls rarely result fatally. After a longer or shorter period of charging, pushing, and struggling the heavier or more enduring of the two begins to shove his weaker antagonist back and round; and the latter then watches his chance and bolts, hotly, but as a rule harmlessly, pursued for a few hundred yards. The massive branching antlers serve as effective guards against the most wicked thrusts. While the antagonists are head on, the worst that can happen is a punch on the shoulder which will not break the thick hide, though it may bruise the flesh underneath. It is only when a beast is caught while turning that there is a chance to deliver

a possibly deadly stab in the flank, with the brow prongs, the "dog-killers" as they are called in bucks. Sometimes, but rarely, fighting wapiti get their antlers interlocked and perish miserably; my own ranch, the Elkhorn, was named from finding on the spot where the ranch house now stands two splendid pairs of elk antlers thus interlocked.

Wapiti keep their antlers until the spring, whereas deer and moose lose theirs by midwinter. The bull's behavior in relation to the cow is merely that of a vicious and brutal coward. He bullies her continually, and in times of danger his one thought is for sneaking off to secure his own safety. For all his noble looks he is a very unamiable beast, who behaves with brutal ferocity to the weak, and shows abject terror of the strong. According to his powers, he is guilty of rape, robbery, and even murder. I never felt the least compunction at shooting a bull, but I hate to shoot a cow, even when forced by necessity. Maternity must always appeal to any one. A cow has more courage than a bull. She will fight valiantly for her young calf, striking such blows with her forefeet that most beasts of prey at once slink away from the combat. Cougars and wolves commit great ravages among the bands; but they often secure their quarry only at the cost of sharp preliminary tussles—and in tussles of this kind they do not always prove victors or escape scathless.

During the rut the bulls are very noisy; and their notes of amorous challenge are called "whistling" by the frontiersmen,—very inappropriately. They begin to whistle about

ten days before they begin to run; and they have in addition an odd kind of bark, which is only heard occasionally. The whistling is a most curious, and to me a most attractive sound, when heard in the great lonely mountains. As with so many other things, much depends upon the surroundings. When listened to nearby and under unfavorable circumstances, the sound resembles a succession of hoarse whistling roars, ending with two or three gasping grunts.

But heard at a little distance, and in its proper place, the call of the wapiti is one of the grandest and most beautiful sounds in nature. Especially is this the case when several rivals are answering one another, on some frosty moonlight night in the mountains. The wild melody rings from chasm to chasm under the giant pines, sustained and modulated, through bar after bar, filled with challenge and proud anger. It thrills the soul of the listening hunter.

Once, while in the mountains, I listened to a peculiarly grand chorus of this kind. We were travelling with pack ponies at the time, and our tent was pitched in a grove of yellow pine, by a brook in the bottom of a valley. On either hand rose the mountains, covered with spruce forest. It was in September, and the first snow had just fallen.

The day before we had walked long and hard; and during the night I slept the heavy sleep of the weary. Early in the morning, just as the east began to grow gray, I waked; and as I did so, the sounds that smote on my ear, caused me to sit up and throw off the

warm blankets. Bull elk were challenging among the mountains on both sides of the valley, a little way from us, their notes echoing like the calling of silver bugles. Groping about in the dark, I drew on my trousers, an extra pair of thick socks, and my moccasins, donned a warm jacket, found my fur cap and gloves, and stole out of the tent with my rifle.

The air was very cold; the stars were beginning to pale in the dawn; on the ground the snow glimmered white, and lay in feathery masses on the branches of the balsams and young pines. The air rang with the challenges of many wapiti; their incessant calling came pealing down through the still, snow-laden woods. First one bull challenged; then another answered; then another and another. Two herds were approaching one another from opposite sides of the valley, a short distance above our camp; and the master bulls were roaring defiance as they mustered their harems.

I walked stealthily up the valley, until I felt that I was nearly between the two herds; and then stood motionless under a tall pine. The ground was quite open at this point, the pines, though large, being scattered; the little brook ran with a strangled murmur between its rows of willows and alders, for the ice along its edges nearly skimmed its breadth. The stars paled rapidly, the gray dawn brightened, and in the sky overhead faint rose-colored streaks were turning blood-red. What little wind there was breathed in my face and kept me from discovery.

I made up my mind, from the sound of the challenging, now very near me, that one bull on my right was advancing towards a rival on my left, who was answering every call. Soon the former approached so near that I could hear him crack the branches, and beat the bushes with his horns; and I slipped quietly from tree to tree, so as to meet him when he came out into the more open woodland. Day broke, and crimson gleams played across the snow-clad mountains beyond.

At last, just as the sun flamed red above the hill-tops, I heard the roar of the wapiti's challenge not fifty yards away; and I cocked and half raised my rifle, and stood motionless. In a moment more, the belt of spruces in front of me swayed and opened, and the lordly bull stepped out. He bore his massive antlers aloft; the snow lay thick on his mane; he snuffed the air and stamped on the ground as he walked. As I drew a bead, the motion caught his eye; and instantly his bearing of haughty and warlike self-confidence changed to one of alarm. My bullet smote through his shoulder-blades, and he plunged wildly forward, and fell full length on the blood-stained snow.

Nothing can be finer than a wapiti bull's carriage when excited or alarmed; he then seems the embodiment of strength and stately grace. But at ordinary times his looks are less attractive, as he walks with his neck level with his body and his head outstretched, his horns lying almost on his shoulders. The favorite gait of the wapiti is the trot, which is very fast, and which they can keep up for

countless miles; when suddenly and greatly alarmed, they break into an awkward gallop, which is faster, but which speedily tires them.

I have occasionally killed elk in the neighborhood of my ranch on the Little Missouri. They were very plentiful along this river until 1881, but the last of the big bands were slaughtered or scattered about that time. Smaller bunches were found for two or three years longer; and to this day, scattered individuals, singly or in parties of two or three, linger here and there in the most remote and inaccessible parts of the broken country. In the old times they were often found on the open prairie, and were fond of sunning themselves on the sand bars by the river, even at midday, while they often fed by daylight (as they do still in remote mountain fastnesses). Nowadays the few survivors dwell in the timber of the roughest ravines, and only venture abroad at dusk or even after nightfall. Thanks to their wariness and seclusiveness, their presence is often not even suspected by the cowboys or others who occasionally ride through their haunts; and so the hunters only know vaguely of their existence. It thus happens that the last individuals of a species may linger in a locality for many years after the rest of their kind have vanished; on the Little Missouri to-day every elk (as in the Rockies every buffalo) killed is at once set down as "the last of its race." For several years in succession I myself kept killing one or two such "last survivors."

A yearling bull which I thus obtained was killed while in company with my staunch

friend Will Dow, on one of the first trips which I took with that prince of drivers, old man Tompkins. We were laying in our stock of winter meat; and had taken the wagon to go to a knot of high and very rugged hills where we knew there were deer, and thought there might be elk. Old Tompkins drove the wagon with unmoved composure up, down, and across frightful-looking hills, and when they became wholly impassable, steered the team over a cut bank and up a kind of winding ravine or wooded washout, until it became too rough and narrow for farther progress. There was good grass for the horses on a hill off to one side of us; and stunted cottonwood trees grew between the straight white walls of clay and sandstone which hemmed in the washout. We pitched our tent by a little trickling spring and kindled a great fire, the fitful glare lighting the bare cliffs and the queer, sprawling tops of the cottonwoods; and after a dinner of fried prairie-chicken went to bed. At dawn we were off, and hunted till nearly noon; when Dow, who had been walking to one side, beckoned to me and remarked, "There's something mighty big in the timber down under the cliff; I guess it's an elk" (he never had seen one before); and the next moment, as old Tompkins expressed it, "the elk came bilin' out of the coulie." Old Tompkins had a rifle on this occasion and the sight of game always drove him crazy; as I aimed I heard Dow telling him "to let the boss do the shooting"; and I killed the elk to a savage interjectional accompaniment of threats delivered at old man Tompkins between the shots.

Elk are sooner killed off than any other game save buffalo, but this is due to their size and the nature of the ground they frequent rather than to their lack of shyness. They like open woodland, or mountainous park country, or hills riven by timber coulies; and such ground is the most favorable to the hunter, and the most attractive in which to hunt. On the other hand moose, for instance, live in such dense cover that it is very difficult to get at them; when elk are driven by incessant persecution to take refuge in similar fastnesses they become almost as hard to kill. In fact, in this respect the elk stands to the moose much as the blacktail stands to the whitetail. The moose and whitetail are somewhat warier than the elk and blacktail; but it is the nature of the ground which they inhabit that tells most in their favor. On the other hand, as compared to the blacktail, it is only the elk's size which puts it at a disadvantage in the struggle for life when the rifle-bearing hunter appears on the scene. It is quite as shy and difficult to approach as the deer; but its bulk renders it much more eagerly hunted, more readily seen, and more easily hit. Occasionally elk suffer from fits of stupid tameness or equally stupid panic; but the same is true of blacktail. In two or three instances, I have seen elk show silly ignorance of danger; but half a dozen times I have known blacktail behave with an even greater degree of stupid familiarity.

There is another point in which the wapiti and blacktail agree in contrast to the moose and whitetail. Both the latter delight in

water-lilies, entering the ponds to find them, and feeding on them greedily. The wapiti is very fond of wallowing in the mud, and of bathing in pools and lakes; but as a rule it shows as little fondness as the blacktail for feeding on water-lilies or other aquatic plants.

In reading of the European red deer, which is nothing but a diminutive wapiti, we often see a "a stag of ten" alluded to as if a full-grown monarch. A full-grown wapiti bull, however, always has twelve, and may have fourteen, regular normal points on his antlers, besides irregular additional prongs; and he occasionally has ten points when a two-year-old, as I have myself seen with calves captured young and tamed. The calf has no horns. The yearling carries two foot-long spikes, sometimes bifurcated, so as to make four points. The two-year-old often has six or eight points on his antlers; but sometimes ten, although they are always small. The three-year-old has eight or ten points, while his body may be nearly as large as that of a full-grown animal. The four-year-old is normally a ten or twelve pointer, but as yet with much smaller antlers than those so proudly borne by the old bulls.

Frontiersmen only occasionally distinguish the prongs by name. The brow and bay points are called dog-killers or war-tines; the tray is known simply as the third point; and the most characteristic prong, the long and massive fourth, is now and then called the dagger-point; the others being known as the fifth and sixth.

In the high mountain forest into which the wapiti has been driven, the large, heavily furred northern lynx, the lucivee, takes the place of the smaller, thinner-haired lynx of the plains and of the more southern districts, the bobcat or wildcat. On the Little Missouri the latter is the common form; yet I have seen a lucivee which was killed there. On Clarke's Fork of the Columbia both occur, the lucivee being the most common. They feed chiefly on hares, squirrels, grouse, fawns, etc.; and the lucivee, at least, also occasionally kills foxes and coons, and has in its turn to dread the pounce of the big timber wolf. Both kinds of lynx can most easily be killed with dogs, as they tree quite readily when thus pursued. The wildcat is often followed on horseback, with a pack of hounds, when the country is favorable; and when chased in this fashion yields excellent sport. The skin of both these lynxes is tender. They often maul an inexperienced pack quite badly, inflicting severe scratches and bites on any hound which has just resolution enough to come to close quarters, but not to rush in furiously; but a big fighting dog will readily kill either. At Thompson's Falls two of Willis' hounds killed a lucivee unaided, though one got torn. Archibald Rogers' dog Sly, a cross between a greyhound and a bull mastiff, killed a bobcat single-handed. He bayed the cat and then began to threaten it, leaping from side to side; suddenly he broke the motion, and rushing in got his foe by the small of the back and killed it without receiving a scratch.

The porcupine is sure to attract the notice

of any one going through the mountains. It is also found in the timber belts fringing the streams of the great plains, where it lives for a week at a time in a single tree or clump of trees, peeling the bark from the limbs. But it is the easiest of all animals to exterminate, and is now abundant only in deep mountain forests. It is very tame and stupid; it goes on the ground, but its fastest pace is a clumsy waddle, and on trees, but is the poorest of tree-climbers,—grasping the trunk like a small, slow bear. It can neither escape nor hide. It trusts to its quills for protection, as the skunk does to its odor; but it is far less astute and more helpless than the skunk. It is readily made into a very unsuspicious and familiar, but uninteresting, pet. I have known it come into camp in the daytime, and forage round the fire by which I was sitting. Its coat protects it against most foes. Bears sometimes eat it when very hungry, as they will eat anything; and I think that elk occasionally destroy it in sheer wantonness. One of its most resolute foes is the fisher, that big sable—almost a wolverine—which preys on everything, from a coon to a fawn, or even a small fox.

The noisy, active little chickarees and chipmunks, however, are by far the most numerous and lively denizens of these deep forests. They are very abundant and very noisy; scolding the travellers exactly as they do the bears when the latter dig up the caches of ants. The chipmunks soon grow tame and visit camp to pick up the crusts. The chickarees often ascend to the highest pine tops,

where they cut off the cones, dropping them to the ground with a noise which often for a moment puzzles the still-hunter.

Two of the most striking and characteristic birds to be seen by him who hunts and camps among the pine-clad and spruce-clad slopes of the northern Rockies are a small crow and a rather large woodpecker. The former is called Clarke's crow, and the latter Lewis' woodpecker. Their names commemorate their discoverers, the explorers Lewis and Clarke, the first white men who crossed the United States to the Pacific, the pioneers of that great army of adventurers who since then have roamed and hunted over the Great Plains and among the Rocky Mountains.

These birds are nearly of a size, being about as large as a flicker. The Clarke's crow, an ash-colored bird with black wings and white tail and forehead, is as common as it is characteristic, and is sure to attract attention. It is as knowing as the rest of its race, and very noisy and active. It flies sometimes in a straight line, with regular wing-beats, sometimes in a succession of loops like a woodpecker, and often lights on rough bark or a dead stump in an attitude like the latter; and it is very fond of scrambling and clinging, often head downwards, among the outermost cones on the top of a pine, chattering loudly all the while. One of the noticeable features of its flight is the hollow, beating sound of the wings. It is restless and fond of company, going by preference in small parties. These little parties often indulge in regular plays, assembling in some tall tree-top

and sailing round and round it, in noisy pursuit of one another, lighting continually among the branches.

The Lewis' woodpecker, a handsome, dark-green bird, with white breast and red belly, is much rarer, quite as shy, and generally less noisy and conspicuous. Its flight is usually strong and steady, like a jay's, and it perches upright among the twigs, or takes short flights after passing insects, as often as it scrambles over the twigs in the ordinary woodpecker fashion. Like its companion, the Clarke's crow, it is ordinarily a bird on the high tree-tops, and around these it indulges in curious aërial games, again like those of the little crow. It is fond of going in troops, and such a troop frequently choose some tall pine and soar round and above it in irregular spirals.

The remarkable and almost amphibious little water wren, with its sweet song, its familiarity, and its very curious habit of running on the bottom of the stream, several feet beneath the surface of the race of rapid water, is the most noticeable of the small birds of the Rocky Mountains. It sometimes sings loudly while floating with half spread wings on the surface of a little pool. Taken as a whole, small birds are far less numerous and noticeable in the wilderness, especially in the deep forests, than in the groves and farmland of the settled country. The hunter and trapper are less familiar with small-bird music than with the screaming of the eagle and the large hawks, the croaking bark of the raven, the loon's cry, the crane's guttural clangor, and

the unearthly yelling and hooting of the big owls.

No bird is so common around camp, so familiar, so amusing on some occasions, and so annoying on others, as that drab-colored imp of iniquity, the whisky-jack—also known as the moose bird and camp robber. The familiarity of these birds is astonishing, and the variety of their cries,—generally harsh, but rarely musical—extraordinary. They snatch scraps of food from the entrances of the tents, and from beside the camp fire; and they shred the venison hung in the trees unless closely watched. I have seen an irate cook of accurate aim knock one off an elk-haunch, with a club seized at random; and I have known another to be killed with a switch, and yet another to be caught alive in the hand. When game is killed they are the first birds to come to the carcass. Following them come the big jays, of a uniform dark-blue color, who bully them, and are bullied in turn by the next arrivals, the magpies; while when the big ravens come, they keep all the others in the back-ground, with the exception of an occasional wide-awake magpie.

For a steady diet no meat tastes better or is more nourishing than elk venison; moreover the different kinds of grouse give variety to the fare, and delicious trout swarm throughout the haunts of the elk in the Rockies. I have never seen them more numerous than in the wonderful and beautiful Yellowstone Canyon, a couple of miles below where the river pitches over the Great Falls, in wind-swayed cataracts of snowy foam. At this

point it runs like a mill-race, in its narrow winding bed, between immense walls of queerly carved and colored rock which tower aloft in almost perpendicular cliffs. Late one afternoon in the fall of '90 Ferguson and I clambered down into the canyon, with a couple of rods, and in an hour caught all the fish we could carry. It then lacked much less than an hour o nightfall, and we had a hard climb to get out of the canyon before darkness overtook us; as there was not a vestige of a path, and as the climbing was exceedingly laborious and at one or two points not entirely without danger, the rocks being practicable in very few places, we could hardly have made much progress after it became too dark to see. Each of us carried the bag of trout in turn, and I personally was nearly done out when we reached the top; and then had to trot three miles to the horses.

CHAPTER X.

AN ELK-HUNT AT TWO-OCEAN PASS.

IN September, 1891, with my ranch-partner, Ferguson, I made an elk-hunt in northwestern Wyoming among the Shoshone Mountains, where they join the Hoodoo and Absoraka ranges. There is no more beautiful game-country in the United States. It is a park land, where glades, meadows, and high mountain pastures break the evergreen forest; a forest which is open compared to the tangled density of the woodland farther north. It is a high, cold region of many lakes and clear rushing streams. The steep mountains are generally of the rounded form so often seen in the ranges of the Cordilleras of the United States; but the Hoodoos, or Goblins, are carved in fantastic and extraordinary shapes; while the Tetons, a group of isolated rock-peaks, show a striking boldness in their lofty outlines.

This was one of the pleasantest hunts I ever made. As always in the mountains, save where the country is so rough and so densely wooded that one must go a-foot, we had a pack-train; and we took a more complete outfit than we had ever before taken on such a hunt, and so travelled in much comfort. Usually when in the mountains I have merely

had one companion, or at most a couple, and two or three pack-ponies; each of us doing his share of the packing, cooking, fetching water, and pitching the small square of canvas which served as tent. In itself packing is both an art and a mystery, and a skilful professional packer, versed in the intricacies of the "diamond hitch," packs with a speed which no non-professional can hope to rival, and fixes the side packs and top packs with such scientific nicety, and adjusts the doubles and turns of the lash-rope so accurately, that everything stays in place under any but the most adverse conditions. Of course, like most hunters, I can myself in case of need throw the diamond hitch after a fashion, and pack on either the off or near side. Indeed, unless a man can pack it is not possible to make a really hard hunt in the mountains, if alone, or with only a single companion. The mere fair-weather hunter, who trusts entirely to the exertions of others, and does nothing more than ride or walk about under favorable circumstances, and shoot at what somebody else shows him, is a hunter in name only. Whoever would really deserve the title must be able at a pinch to shift for himself, to grapple with the difficulties and hardships of wilderness life unaided, and not only to hunt, but at times to travel for days, whether on foot or on horseback, alone. However, after one has passed one's novitiate, it is pleasant to be comfortable when the comfort does not interfere with the sport; and although a man sometimes likes to hunt alone, yet often it is well to be with some old mountain hunter, a

master of woodcraft, who is a first-rate hand at finding game, creeping upon it, and tracking it when wounded. With such a companion one gets much more game, and learns many things by observation instead of by painful experience.

On this trip we had with us two hunters, Tazewell Woody and Elwood Hofer, a packer who acted as cook, and a boy to herd the horses. Of the latter, there were twenty; six saddle-animals and fourteen for the packs—two or three being spare horses, to be used later in carrying the elk-antlers, sheep-horns, and other trophies. Like most hunters' pack-animals, they were either half-broken, or else broken down; tough, unkempt, jaded-looking beasts of every color—sorrel, buckskin, pinto, white, bay, roan. After the day's work was over, they were turned loose to shift for themselves; and about once a week they strayed, and all hands had to spend the better part of the day hunting for them. The worst ones for straying, curiously enough, were three broken-down old "bear-baits," which went by themselves, as is generally the case with the cast-off horses of a herd. There were two sleeping tents, another for the provisions,—in which we ate during bad weather,—and a canvas tepee, which was put up with lodge-poles, Indian fashion, like a wigwam. A tepee is more difficult to put up than an ordinary tent; but it is very convenient when there is rain or snow. A small fire kindled in the middle keeps it warm, the smoke escaping through the open top—that is, when it escapes at all; strings are passed from one pole to

another, on which to hang wet clothes and shoes, and the beds are made around the edges. As an offset to the warmth and shelter, the smoke often renders it impossible even to sit upright. We had a very good camp-kit, including plenty of cooking- and eating-utensils; and among our provisions were some canned goods and sweetmeats, to give a relish to our meals of meat and bread. We had fur coats and warm clothes,—which are chiefly needed at night,—and plenty of bedding, including water-proof canvas sheeting and a couple of caribou-hide sleeping-bags, procured from the survivors of a party of arctic explorers. Except on rainy days I used my buckskin hunting shirt or tunic; in dry weather I deem it, because of its color, texture, and durability, the best possible garb for the still-hunter, especially in the woods.

Starting a day's journey south of Heart Lake, we travelled and hunted on the eastern edge of the great basin, wooded and mountainous, wherein rise the head-waters of the mighty Snake River. There was not so much as a spotted line—that series of blazes made with the axe, man's first highway through the hoary forest,—but this we did not mind, as for most of the distance we followed the well-worn elk-trails. The train travelled in Indian file. At the head, to pick the path, rode tall, silent old Woody, a true type of the fast-vanishing race of game hunters and Indian fighters, a man who had been one of the California forty-niners, and who ever since had lived the restless, reckless life of the wilderness. Then came Ferguson and myself; then

the pack-animals, strung out in line; while from the rear rose the varied oaths of our three companions, whose miserable duty it was to urge forward the beasts of burden.

It is heart-breaking work to drive a pack-train through thick timber and over mountains, where there is either a dim trail or none. The animals have a perverse faculty for choosing the wrong turn at critical moments; and they are continually scraping under branches and squeezing between tree-trunks, to the jeopardy or destruction of their burdens. After having been laboriously driven up a very steep incline, at the cost of severe exertion both to them and to the men, the foolish creatures turn and run down to the bottom, so that all the work has to be done over again. Some travel too slow; others travel too fast. Yet one cannot but admire the toughness of the animals, and the surefootedness with which they pick their way along the sheer mountain sides, or among boulders and over fallen logs.

As our way was so rough, we found that we had to halt at least once every hour to fix the packs. Moreover, we at the head of the column were continually being appealed to for help by the unfortunates in the rear. First it would be "that white-eyed cayuse: one side of its pack 's down!" then we would be notified that the saddle-blanket of the "lop-eared Indian buckskin" had slipped back; then a shout "Look out for the pinto!" would be followed by that pleasing beast's appearance, bucking and squealing, smashing dead timber, and scattering its load to the

four winds. It was no easy task to get the horses across some of the boggy places without miring; or to force them through the denser portions of the forest, where there was much down timber. Riding with a pack-train, day in and day out, becomes both monotonous and irritating, unless one is upheld by the hope of a game-country ahead, or by the delight of exploration of the unknown. Yet when buoyed by such a hope, there is pleasure in taking a train across so beautiful and wild a country as that which lay on the threshold of our hunting grounds in the Shoshones. We went over mountain passes, with ranges of scalped peaks on either hand; we skirted the edges of lovely lakes, and of streams with boulder-strewn beds; we plunged into depths of sombre woodland, broken by wet prairies. It was a picturesque sight to see the loaded pack-train stringing across one of these high mountain meadows, the motley colored line of ponies winding round the marshy spots through the bright green grass, while beyond rose the dark line of frowning forest, with lofty peaks towering in the background. Some of the meadows were beautiful with many flowers—goldenrod, purple aster, bluebells, white immortelles, and here and there masses of blood-red Indian pinks. In the park-country, on the edges of the evergreen forest, were groves of delicate quaking-aspen, the trees often growing to quite a height; their tremulous leaves were already changing to bright green and yellow, occasionally with a reddish blush. In the Rocky Mountains the aspens are almost the only

deciduous trees, their foliage offering a pleasant relief to the eye after the monotony of the unending pine and spruce woods, which afford so striking a contrast to the hardwood forest east of the Mississippi.

For two days our journey was uneventful, save that we came on the camp of a squaw-man—one Beaver Dick, an old mountain hunter, living in a skin tetee, where dwelt his comely Indian wife and half-breed children. He had quite a herd of horses, many of them mares and colts; they had evidently been well treated, and came up to us fearlessly.

The morning of the third day of our journey was gray and lowering. Gusts of rain blew in my face as I rode at the head of the train. It still lacked an hour of noon, as we were plodding up a valley beside a rapid brook running through narrow willow-flats, the dark forest crowding down on either hand from the low foot-hills of the mountains. Suddenly the call of a bull elk came echoing down through the wet woodland on our right, beyond the brook, seemingly less than half a mile off; and was answered by a faint, far-off call from a rival on the mountain beyond. Instantly halting the train, Woody and I slipped off our horses, crossed the brook, and started to still-hunt the first bull.

In this place the forest was composed of the western tamarack; the large, tall trees stood well apart, and there was much down timber, but the ground was covered with deep wet moss, over which we trod silently. The elk was travelling up-wind, but slowly,

stopping continually to paw the ground and thresh the bushes with his antlers. He was very noisy, challenging every minute or two, being doubtless much excited by the neighborhood of his rival on the mountain. We followed, Woody leading, guided by the incessant calling.

It was very exciting as we crept toward the great bull, and the challenge sounded nearer and nearer. While we were still at some distance the pealing notes were like those of a bugle, delivered in two bars, first rising, then abruptly falling ; as we drew nearer they took on a harsh squealing sound. Each call made our veins thrill ; it sounded like the cry of some huge beast of prey. At last we heard the roar of the challenge not eighty yards off. Stealing forward three or four yards, I saw the tips of the horns through a mass of dead timber and young growth, and I slipped to one side to get a clean shot. Seeing us but not making out what we were, and full of fierce and insolent excitement, the wapiti bull stepped boldly toward us with a stately swinging gait. Then he stood motionless, facing us, barely fifty yards away, his handsome twelve-tined antlers tossed aloft, as he held his head with the lordly grace of his kind. I fired into his chest, and as he turned I raced forward and shot him in the flank ; but the second bullet was not needed, for the first wound was mortal, and he fell before going fifty yards.

The dead elk lay among the young evergreens. The huge, shapely body was set on

legs that were as strong as steel rods, and yet slender, clean, and smooth; they were in color a beautiful dark brown, contrasting well with the yellowish of the body. The neck and throat were garnished with a mane of long hair; the symmetry of the great horns set off the fine, delicate lines of the noble head. He had been wallowing, as elk are fond of doing, and the dried mud clung in patches to his flank; a stab in the haunch showed that he had been overcome in battle by some master bull who had turned him out of the herd.

We cut off the head, and bore it down to the train. The horses crowded together, snorting, with their ears pricked forward, as they smelt the blood. We also took the loins with us, as we were out of meat, though bull elk in the rutting season is not very good. The rain had changed to a steady downpour when we again got under way. Two or three miles farther we pitched camp, in a clump of pines on a hillock in the bottom of the valley, starting hot fires of pitchy stumps before the tents, to dry our wet things.

Next day opened with fog and cold rain. The drenched pack-animals, when driven into camp, stood mopingly, with drooping heads and arched backs; they groaned and grunted as the loads were placed on their backs and the cinches tightened, the packers bracing one foot against the pack to get a purchase as they hauled in on the lash-rope. A stormy morning is a trial to temper; the packs are wet and heavy, and the cold makes the work

even more than usually hard on the hands. By ten we broke camp. It needs between two and three hours to break camp and get such a train properly packed; once started, our day's journey was six to eight hours, making no halt. We started up a steep, pine-clad mountain side, broken by cliffs. My hunting-shoes, though comfortable, were old and thin, and let the water through like a sieve. On the top of the first plateau, where black spruce groves were strewn across the grassy surface, we saw a band of elk, cows and calves, trotting off through the rain. Then we plunged down into a deep valley, and, crossing it, a hard climb took us to the top of a great bare table-land, bleak and wind-swept. We passed little alpine lakes, fringed with scattering dwarf evergreens. Snow lay in drifts on the north sides of the gullies; a cutting wind blew the icy rain in our faces. For two or three hours we travelled toward the farther edge of the table-land. In one place a spike bull elk stood half a mile off, in the open; he travelled to and fro, watching us.

As we neared the edge the storm lulled, and pale, watery sunshine gleamed through the rifts in the low-scudding clouds. At last our horses stood on the brink of a bold cliff. Deep down beneath our feet lay the wild and lonely valley of Two-Ocean Pass, walled in on either hand by rugged mountain chains, their flanks scarred and gashed by precipice and chasm. Beyond, in a wilderness of jagged and barren peaks, stretched the Shoshones. At the middle point of the pass,

two streams welled down from either side. At first each flowed in but one bed, but soon divided into two; each of the twin branches then joined the like branch of the brook opposite, and swept one to the east and one to the west, on their long journey to the two great oceans. They ran as rapid brooks, through wet meadows and willow-flats, the eastern to the Yellowstone, the western to the Snake. The dark pine forests swept down from the flanks and lower ridges of the mountains to the edges of the marshy valley. Above them jutted gray rock peaks, snow-drifts lying in the rents that seamed their northern faces. Far below us, from a great basin at the foot of the cliff, filled with the pine forest, rose the musical challenge of a bull elk; and we saw a band of cows and calves looking like mice as they ran among the trees.

It was getting late, and after some search we failed to find any trail leading down; so at last we plunged over the brink at a venture. It was very rough scrambling, dropping from bench to bench, and in places it was not only difficult but dangerous for the loaded pack-animals. Here and there we were helped by well-beaten elk-trails, which we could follow for several hundred yards at a time. On one narrow pine-clad ledge, we met a spike bull face to face; and in scrambling down a very steep, bare, rock-strewn shoulder the loose stones started by the horses' hoofs, bounding in great leaps to the forest below, dislodged two cows.

As evening fell, we reached the bottom, and

pitched camp in a beautiful point of open pine forest, thrust out into the meadow. There was good shelter, and plenty of wood, water, and grass; we built a huge fire and put up our tents, scattering them in likely places among the pines, which grew far apart and without undergrowth. We dried our steaming clothes, and ate a hearty supper of elk-meat; then we turned into our beds, warm and dry, and slept soundly under the canvas, while all night long the storm roared without. Next morning it still stormed fitfully; the high peaks and ridges round about were all capped with snow. Woody and I started on foot for an all-day tramp; the amount of game seen the day before showed that we were in a good elk-country, where the elk had been so little disturbed that they were travelling, feeding, and whistling in daylight. For three hours we walked across the forest-clad spurs of the foot-hills. We roused a small band of elk in thick timber; but they rushed off before we saw them, with much smashing of dead branches. Then we climbed to the summit of the range. The wind was light and baffling; it blew from all points, veering every few minutes. There were occasional rain-squalls; our feet and legs were well soaked; and we became chilled through whenever we sat down to listen. We caught a glimpse of a big bull feeding up-hill, and followed him; it needed smart running to overtake him, for an elk, even while feeding, has a ground-covering gait. Finally we got within a hundred and twenty-five yards, but in very thick timber, and all I could see plainly was the hip and the

after-part of the flank. I waited for a chance at the shoulder, but the bull got my wind and was off before I could pull trigger. It was just one of those occasions when there are two courses to pursue, neither very good, and when one is apt to regret whichever decision is made.

At noon we came to the edge of a deep and wide gorge, and sat down shivering to await what might turn up, our fingers numb, and our wet feet icy. Suddenly the love-challenge of an elk came pealing across the gorge, through the fine, cold rain, from the heart of the forest opposite. An hour's stiff climb, down and up, brought us nearly to him; but the wind forced us to advance from below through a series of open glades. He was lying on a point of the cliff-shoulder, surrounded by his cows; and he saw us and made off. An hour afterward, as we were trudging up a steep hill-side dotted with groves of fir and spruce, a young bull of ten points, roused from his day-bed by our approach, galloped across us some sixty yards off. We were in need of better venison than can be furnished by an old rutting bull; so I instantly took a shot at the fat and tender young ten-pointer. I aimed well ahead and pulled trigger just as he came to a small gully; and he fell into it in a heap with a resounding crash. This was on the birthday of my eldest small son; so I took him home the horns, "for his very own." On the way back that afternoon I shot off the heads of two blue grouse, as they perched in the pines.

That evening the storm broke, and the

weather became clear and very cold, so that the snow made the frosty mountains gleam like silver. The moon was full, and in the flood of light the wild scenery round our camp was very beautiful. As always where we camped for several days, we had fixed long tables and settles, and were most comfortable; and when we came in at nightfall, or sometimes long afterward, cold, tired, and hungry, it was sheer physical delight to get warm before the roaring fire of pitchy stumps, and then to feast ravenously on bread and beans, on stewed or roasted elk venison, on grouse and sometimes trout, and flapjacks with maple syrup.

Next morning dawned clear and cold, the sky a glorious blue. Woody and I started to hunt over the great table-land, and led our stout horses up the mountain-side, by elk-trails so bad that they had to climb like goats. All these elk-trails have one striking peculiarity. They lead through thick timber, but every now and then send off short, well-worn branches to some cliff-edge or jutting crag, commanding a view far and wide over the country beneath. Elk love to stand on these lookout points, and scan the valleys and mountains round about.

Blue grouse rose from beside our path; Clarke's crows flew past us, with a hollow, flapping sound, or lit in the pine-tops, calling and flirting their tails; the gray-clad whisky-jacks, with multitudinous cries, hopped and fluttered near us. Snow-shoe rabbits scuttled away, the big furry feet which give them their name already turning white. At last we came

out on the great plateau, seamed with deep, narrow ravines. Reaches of pasture alternated with groves and open forests of varying size. Almost immediately we heard the bugle of a bull elk, and saw a big band of cows and calves on the other side of a valley. There were three bulls with them, one very large, and we tried to creep up on them; but the wind was baffling and spoiled our stalk. So we returned to our horses, mounted them, and rode a mile farther, toward a large open wood on a hill-side. When within two hundred yards we heard directly ahead the bugle of a bull, and pulled up short. In a moment I saw him walking through an open glade; he had not seen us. The slight breeze brought us down his scent. Elk have a strong characteristic smell; it is usually sweet, like that of a herd of Alderney cows; but in old bulls, while rutting, it is rank, pungent, and lasting. We stood motionless till the bull was out of sight, then stole to the wood, tied our horses, and trotted after him. He was travelling fast, occasionally calling; whereupon others in the neighborhood would answer. Evidently he had been driven out of some herd by the master bull.

He went faster than we did, and while we were vainly trying to overtake him we heard another very loud and sonorous challenge to our left. It came from a ridge-crest at the edge of the woods, among some scattered clumps of the northern nut-pine or pinyon—a queer conifer, growing very high on the mountains, its multiforked trunk and wide-spreading branches giving it the rounded top, and,

at a distance, the general look of an oak rather than a pine. We at once walked toward the ridge, up-wind. In a minute or two, to our chagrin, we stumbled on an outlying spike bull, evidently kept on the outskirts of the herd by the master bull. I thought he would alarm all the rest; but, as we stood motionless, he could not see clearly what we were. He stood, ran, stood again, gazed at us, and trotted slowly off. We hurried forward as fast as we dared, and with too little care; for we suddenly came in view of two cows. As they raised their heads to look, Woody squatted down where he was, to keep their attention fixed, while I cautiously tried to slip off to one side unobserved. Favored by the neutral tint of my buckskin hunting-shirt, with which my shoes, leggins, and soft hat matched, I succeeded. As soon as I was out of sight I ran hard and came up to a hillock crested with pinyons, behind which I judged I should find the herd. As I approached the crest, their strong, sweet smell smote my nostrils. In another moment I saw the tips of a pair of mighty antlers, and I peered over the crest with my rifle at the ready. Thirty yards off, behind a clump of pinyons, stood a huge bull, his head thrown back as he rubbed his shoulders with his horns. There were several cows around him, and one saw me immediately, and took alarm. I fired into the bull's shoulder, inflicting a mortal wound; but he went off, and I raced after him at top speed, firing twice into his flank; then he stopped, very sick, and I broke his neck with a fourth bullet. An elk often

hesitates in the first moments of surprise and fright, and does not get really under way for two or three hundred yards; but, when once fairly started, he may go several miles, even though mortally wounded; therefore, the hunter, after his first shot, should run forward as fast as he can, and shoot again and again until the quarry drops. In this way many animals that would otherwise be lost are obtained, especially by the man who has a repeating-rifle. Nevertheless the hunter should beware of being led astray by the ease with which he can fire half a dozen shots from his repeater; and he should aim as carefully with each shot as if it were his last. No possible rapidity of fire can atone for habitual carelessness of aim with the first shot.

The elk I thus slew was a giant. His body was the size of a steer's, and his antlers, though not unusually long, were very massive and heavy. He lay in a glade, on the edge of a great cliff. Standing on its brink we overlooked a most beautiful country, the home of all homes for the elk: a wilderness of mountains, the immense evergreen forest broken by park and glade, by meadow and pasture, by bare hill-side and barren table-land. Some five miles off lay the sheet of water known to the old hunters as Spotted Lake; two or three shallow, sedgy places, and spots of geyser formation, made pale green blotches on its wind-rippled surface. Far to the southwest, in daring beauty and majesty, the grand domes and lofty spires of the Tetons shot into the blue sky. Too sheer for the snow to rest on their sides, it yet filled

the rents in their rough flanks, and lay deep between the towering pinnacles of dark rock.

That night, as on more than one night afterward, a bull elk came down whistling to within two or three hundred yards of the tents, and tried to join the horse herd. The moon had set, so I could not go after it. Elk are very restless and active throughout the night in the rutting season; but where undisturbed they feed freely in the daytime, resting for two or three hours about noon.

Next day, which was rainy, we spent in getting in the antlers and meat of the two dead elk; and I shot off the heads of two or three blue grouse on the way home. The following day I killed another bull elk, following him by the strong, not unpleasing, smell, and hitting him twice as he ran, at about eighty yards. So far I had had good luck, killing everything I had shot at; but now the luck changed, through no fault of mine, as far as I could see, and Ferguson had his innings. The day after I killed this bull he shot two fine mountain rams; and during the remainder of our hunt he killed five elk,—one cow, for meat, and four good bulls. The two rams were with three others, all old and with fine horns; Ferguson peeped over a lofty precipice and saw them coming up it only fifty yards below him. His two first and finest bulls were obtained by hard running and good shooting; the herds were on the move at the time, and only his speed of foot and soundness of wind enabled him to get near enough for a shot. One herd started before he got close, and he killed the master

bull by a shot right through the heart, as it trotted past, a hundred and fifty yards distant.

As for me, during the next ten days I killed nothing save one cow for meat; and this though I hunted hard every day from morning till night, no matter what the weather. It was stormy, with hail and snow almost every day; and after working hard from dawn until nightfall, laboriously climbing the slippery mountain-sides, walking through the wet woods, and struggling across the bare plateaus and cliff-shoulders, while the violent blasts of wind drove the frozen rain in our faces, we would come in after dusk wet through and chilled to the marrow. Even when it rained in the valleys it snowed on the mountain-tops, and there was no use trying to keep our feet dry. I got three shots at bull elk, two being very hurried snap-shots at animals running in thick timber, the other a running-shot in the open, at over two hundred yards; and I missed all three. On most days I saw no bull worth shooting; the two or three I did see or hear we failed to stalk, the light, shifty wind baffling us, or else an outlying cow which we had not seen giving the alarm. There were many blue and a few ruffed grouse in the woods, and I occasionally shot off the heads of a couple on my way homeward in the evening. In racing after one elk, I leaped across a gully and so bruised and twisted my heel on a rock that, for the remainder of my stay in the mountains, I had to walk on the fore part of that foot. This did not interfere much with my walking, however, except in going downhill.

Our ill success was in part due to sheer bad luck; but the chief element therein was the presence of a great hunting-party of Shoshone Indians. Split into bands of eight or ten each, they scoured the whole country on their tough, sure-footed ponies. They always hunted on horseback, and followed the elk at full speed wherever they went. Their method of hunting was to organize great drives, the riders strung in lines far apart; they signalled to one another by means of willow whistles, with which they also imitated the calling of the bull elk, thus tolling the animals to them, or making them betray their whereabouts. As they slew whatever they could, but by preference cows and calves, and as they were very persevering, but also very excitable and generally poor shots, so that they wasted much powder, they not only wrought havoc among the elk, but also scared the survivors out of all the country over which they hunted.

Day in and day out we plodded on. In a hunting trip the days of long monotony in getting to the ground, and the days of unrequited toil after it has been reached, always far outnumber the red-letter days of success. But it is just these times of failure that really test the hunter. In the long run, common-sense and dogged perseverance avail him more than any other qualities. The man who does not give up, but hunts steadily and resolutely through the spells of bad luck until the luck turns, is the man who wins success in the end.

After a week at Two-Ocean Pass, we

gathered our pack-animals one frosty morning, and again set off across the mountains. A two-days' jaunt took us to the summit of Wolverine Pass, near Pinyon Peak, beside a little mountain tarn; each morning we found its surface skimmed with black ice, for the nights were cold. After three or four days, we shifted camp to the mouth of Wolverine Creek, to get off the hunting grounds of the Indians. We had used up our last elk-meat that morning, and when we were within a couple of hours' journey of our intended halting-place, Woody and I struck off on foot for a hunt. Just before sunset we came on three or four elk; a spike bull stood for a moment behind some thick evergreens a hundred yards off. Guessing at his shoulder, I fired, and he fell dead after running a few rods. I had broken the luck, after ten days of ill success.

Next morning Woody and I, with the packer, rode to where this elk lay. We loaded the meat on a pack-horse, and let the packer take both the loaded animal and our own saddle-horses back to camp, while we made a hunt on foot. We went up the steep, forest-clad mountain-side, and before we had walked an hour heard two elk whistling ahead of us. The woods were open, and quite free from undergrowth, and we were able to advance noiselessly; there was no wind, for the weather was still, clear, and cold. Both of the elk were evidently very much excited, answering each other continually; they had probably been master bulls, but had become so exhausted that their rivals had driven them from the herds, forcing them to remain in se-

clusion until they regained their lost strength. As we crept stealthily forward, the calling grew louder and louder, until we could hear the grunting sounds with which the challenge of the nearest ended. He was in a large wallow, which was also a lick. When we were still sixty yards off, he heard us, and rushed out, but wheeled and stood a moment to gaze, puzzled by my buckskin suit. I fired into his throat, breaking his neck, and down he went in a heap. Rushing in and turning, I called to Woody, "He's a twelve-pointer, but the horns are small!" As I spoke I heard the roar of the challenge of the other bull not two hundred yards ahead, as if in defiant answer to my shot.

Running quietly forward, I speedily caught a glimpse of his body. He was behind some fir-trees about seventy yards off, and I could not see which way he was standing, and so fired into the patch of flank which was visible, aiming high, to break the back. My aim was true, and the huge beast crashed down-hill through the evergreens, pulling himself on his fore legs for fifteen or twenty rods, his hind quarters trailing. Racing forward, I broke his neck. His antlers were the finest I ever got. A couple of whisky-jacks appeared at the first crack of the rifle with their customary astonishing familiarity and heedlessness of the hunter; they followed the wounded bull as he dragged his great carcass down the hill, and pounced with ghoulish bloodthirstiness on the gouts of blood that were sprinkled over the green herbage.

These two bulls lay only a couple of hun-

dred yards apart, on a broad game-trail, which was as well beaten as a good bridle path. We began to skin out the heads ; and as we were finishing we heard another bull challenging far up the mountain. He came nearer and nearer, and as soon as we had ended our work we grasped our rifles and trotted toward him along the game-trail. He was very noisy, uttering his loud, singing challenge every minute or two. The trail was so broad and firm that we walked in perfect silence. After going only five or six hundred yards, we got very close indeed, and stole forward on tip-toe, listening to the roaring music. The sound came from a steep, narrow ravine, to one side of the trail, and I walked toward it with my rifle at the ready. A slight puff gave the elk my wind, and he dashed out of the ravine like a deer ; but he was only thirty yards off, and my bullet went into his shoulder as he passed behind a clump of young spruce. I plunged into the ravine, scrambled out of it, and raced after him. In a minute I saw him standing with drooping head, and two more shots finished him. He also bore fine antlers. It was a great piece of luck to get three such fine bulls at the cost of half a day's light work ; but we had fairly earned them, having worked hard for ten days, through rain, cold, hunger, and fatigue, to no purpose. That evening my home-coming to camp, with three elk-tongues and a brace of ruffed grouse hung at my belt, was most happy.

Next day it snowed, but we brought a pack-pony to where the three great bulls lay, and took their heads to camp ; the flesh was far too

strong to be worth taking, for it was just the height of the rut.

This was the end of my hunt; and a day later Hofer and I, with two pack-ponies, made a rapid push for the Upper Geyser Basin. We travelled fast. The first day was gray and overcast, a cold wind blowing strong in our faces. Toward evening we came on a bull elk in a willow thicket; he was on his knees in a hollow, thrashing and beating the willows with his antlers. At dusk we halted and went into camp, by some small pools on the summit of the pass north of Red Mountain. The elk were calling all around us. We pitched our cozy tent, dragged great stumps for the fire, cut evergreen boughs for our beds, watered the horses, tethered them to improvised picket-pins in a grassy glade, and then set about getting supper ready. The wind had gone down, and snow was falling thick in large, soft flakes; we were evidently at the beginning of a heavy snowstorm. All night we slept soundly in our snug tent. When we arose at dawn there was a foot and a half of snow on the ground, and the flakes were falling as fast as ever. There is no more tedious work than striking camp in bad weather; and it was over two hours from the time we rose to the time we started. It is sheer misery to untangle picket-lines and to pack animals when the ropes are frozen; and by the time we had loaded the two shivering, wincing pack-ponies, and had bridled and saddled our own riding-animals, our hands and feet were numb and stiff with cold, though we were really hampered by our warm cloth-

ing. My horse was a wild, nervous roan, and as I swung carelessly into the saddle, he suddenly began to buck before I got my right leg over, and threw me off. My thumb was put out of joint. I pulled it in again, and speedily caught my horse in the dead timber. Then I treated him as what the cowboys call a "mean horse," and mounted him carefully, so as not to let him either buck or go over backward. However, his preliminary success had inspirited him, and a dozen times that day he began to buck, usually choosing a down grade, where the snow was deep, and there was much fallen timber.

All day long we pushed steadily through the cold, blinding snowstorm. Neither squirrels nor rabbits were abroad; and a few Clarke's crows, whisky-jacks, and chickadees were the only living things we saw. At nightfall, chilled through, we reached the Upper Geyser Basin. Here I met a party of railroad surveyors and engineers, coming in from their summer's field-work. One of them lent me a saddle-horse and a pack-pony, and we went on together, breaking our way through the snow-choked roads to the Mammoth Hot Springs, while Hofer took my own horses back to Ferguson.

I have described this hunt at length because, though I enjoyed it particularly on account of the comfort in which we travelled and the beauty of the land, yet, in point of success in finding and killing game, in value of trophies procured, and in its alternations of good and bad luck, it may fairly stand as the type of a dozen such hunts I have made. Twice I

have been much more successful; the difference being due to sheer luck, as I hunted equally hard in all three instances. Thus on this trip I killed and saw nothing but elk; yet the other members of the party either saw, or saw fresh signs of, not only blacktail deer, but sheep, bear, bison, moose, cougar, and wolf. Now in 1889 I hunted over almost precisely similar country, only farther to the northwest, on the boundary between Idaho and Montana, and, with the exception of sheep, I stumbled on all the animals mentioned, and white goat in addition, so that my bag of twelve head actually included eight species—much the best bag I ever made, and the only one that could really be called out of the common. In 1884, on a trip to the Bighorn Mountains, I killed three bear, six elk and six deer. In laying in the winter stock of meat for my ranch I often far excelled these figures as far as mere numbers went; but on no other regular hunting trip, where the quality and not the quantity of the game was the prime consideration, have I ever equalled them; and on several where I worked hardest I hardly averaged a head a week. The occasional days or weeks of phenomenal luck, are more than earned by the many others where no luck whatever follows the very hardest work. Yet, if a man hunts with steady resolution he is apt to strike enough lucky days amply to repay him.

On this Shoshone trip I fired fifty-eight shots. In preference to using the knife I generally break the neck of an elk which is still struggling; and I fire at one as long as it can stand,

preferring to waste a few extra bullets, rather than see an occasional head of game escape. In consequence of these two traits the nine elk I got (two running at sixty and eighty yards, the others standing, at from thirty to a hundred) cost me twenty-three bullets; and I missed, three shots—all three, it is but fair to say, difficult ones. I also cut off the heads of seventeen grouse, with twenty-two shots; and killed two ducks with ten shots—fifty-eight in all. On the Bighorn trip I used a hundred and two cartridges. On no other trip did I use fifty.

To me still-hunting elk in the mountains, when they are calling, is one of the most attractive of sports, not only because of the size and stately beauty of the quarry and the grand nature of the trophy, but because of the magnificence of the scenery, and the stirring, manly, exciting the nature of the chase itself. It yields more vigorous enjoyment than does lurking stealthily through the grand but gloomy monotony of the marshy woodland where dwells the moose. The climbing among the steep forest-clad and glade-strewn mountains is just difficult enough thoroughly to test soundness in wind and limb, while without the heart-breaking fatigue of white-goat hunting. The actual grapple with an angry grisly is of course far more full of strong, eager pleasure; but bear hunting is the most uncertain, and usually the least productive, of sports.

As regards strenuous, vigorous work, and pleasurable excitement the chase of the bighorn alone stands higher. But the bighorn, grand beast of the chase though he be, is sur-

passed in size, both of body and of horns, by certain of the giant sheep of Central Asia; whereas the wapiti is not only the most stately and beautiful of American game—far more so than the bison and moose, his only rivals in size—but is also the noblest of the stag kind throughout the world. Whoever kills him has killed the chief of his race; for he stands far above his brethren of Asia and Europe.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MOOSE; THE BEAST OF THE WOODLAND.

THE moose is the giant of all deer; and many hunters esteem it the noblest of American game. Beyond question there are few trophies more prized than the huge shovel horns of this strange dweller in the cold northland forests.

I shot my first moose after making several fruitless hunting trips with this special game in view. The season I finally succeeded it was only after having hunted two or three weeks in vain, among the Bitter Root Mountains, and the ranges lying southeast of them.

I began about the first of September by making a trial with my old hunting friend Willis. We speedily found a country where there were moose, but of the animals themselves we never caught a glimpse. We tried to kill them by hunting in the same manner that we hunted elk; that is, by choosing a place where there was sign, and going carefully through it against or across the wind. However, this plan failed; though at that very time we succeeded in killing elk in this way, devoting one or two days to their pursuit. There were both elk and moose in the country, but they were usually found in different kinds of ground, though often close alongside

one another. The former went in herds, the cows, calves, and yearlings by themselves, and they roamed through the higher and more open forests, well up towards timber line. The moose, on the contrary, were found singly or in small parties composed at the outside of a bull, a cow, and her young of two years; for the moose is practically monogamous, in strong contrast to the highly polygamous wapiti and caribou.

The moose did not seem to care much whether they lived among the summits of the mountains or not, so long as they got the right kind of country; for they were much more local in their distribution, and at this season less given to wandering than their kin with round horns. What they wished was a cool, swampy region of very dense growth; in the main chains of the northern Rockies even the valleys are high enough to be cold. Of course many of the moose lived on the wooded summits of the lower ranges; and most of them came down lower in winter than in summer, following about a fortnight after the elk; but if in a large tract of woods the cover was dense and the ground marshy, though it was in a valley no higher than the herds of the ranchmen grazed, or perchance even in the immediate neighborhood of a small frontier hamlet, then it might be chosen by some old bull who wished to lie in seclusion till his horns were grown, or by some cow with a calf to raise. Before settlers came to this high mountain region of Western Montana, a moose would often thus live in an isolated marshy tract surrounded by open country. They

grazed throughout the summer on marsh plants, notably lily stems, and nibbled at the tops of the very tall natural hay of the meadows. The legs of the beast are too long and the neck too short to allow it to graze habitually on short grass; yet in the early spring when greedy for the tender blades of young, green marsh grass, the moose will often shuffle down on its knees to get at them, and it will occasionally perform the same feat to get a mouthful or two of snow in winter.

The moose which lived in isolated, exposed localities were speedily killed or driven away after the incoming of settlers; and at the time that we hunted we found no sign of them until we reached the region of continuous forest. Here, in a fortnight's hunting, we found as much sign as we wished, and plenty of it fresh; but the animals themselves we not only never saw but we never so much as heard. Often after hours of careful still-hunting or cautious tracking, we found the footprints deep in the soft earth, showing where our quarry had winded or heard us, and had noiselessly slipped away from the danger. It is astonishing how quietly a moose can steal through the woods if it wishes: and it has what is to the hunter a very provoking habit of making a half or three quarters circle before lying down, and then crouching with its head so turned that it can surely perceive any pursuer who may follow its trail. We tried every method to outwit the beasts. We attempted to track them; we beat through likely spots; sometimes we merely "sat on a log" and awaited events, by a drinking hole,

meadow, mud wallow or other such place (a course of procedure which often works well in still-hunting); but all in vain.

Our main difficulty lay in the character of the woods which the moose haunted. They were choked and tangled to the last degree, consisting of a mass of thick-growing conifers, with dead timber strewn in every direction, and young growth filling the spaces between the trunks. We could not see twenty yards ahead of us, and it was almost impossible to walk without making a noise. Elk were occasionally found in these same places; but usually they frequented more open timber, where the hunting was beyond comparison easier. Perhaps more experienced hunters would have killed their game; though in such cover the best tracker and still-hunter alive cannot always reckon on success with really wary animals. But, be this as it may, we, at any rate, were completely baffled, and I began to think that this moose-hunt, like all my former ones, was doomed to end in failure.

However, a few days later I met a crabbed old trapper named Hank Griffin, who was going after beaver in the mountains, and who told me that if I would come with him he would show me moose. I jumped at the chance, and he proved as good as his word; though for the first two trials my ill luck did not change.

At the time that it finally did change we had at last reached a place where the moose were on favorable ground. A high, marshy valley stretched for several miles between two rows of stony mountains, clad with a

forest of rather small fir-trees. This valley was covered with reeds, alders, and rank grass, and studded with little willow-bordered ponds and island-like clumps of spruce and graceful tamaracks.

Having surveyed the ground and found moose sign the preceding afternoon, we were up betimes in the cool morning to begin our hunt. Before sunrise we were posted on a rocky spur of the foot-hills, behind a mask of evergreens; ourselves unseen we overlooked all the valley, and we knew we could see any animal which might be either feeding away from cover or on its journey homeward from its feeding ground to its day-bed.

As it grew lighter we scanned the valley with increasing care and eagerness. The sun rose behind us; and almost as soon as it was up we made out some large beast moving among the dwarf willows beside a little lake half a mile in our front. In a few minutes the thing walked out where the bushes were thinner, and we saw that it was a young bull moose browsing on the willow tops. He had evidently nearly finished his breakfast, and he stood idly for some moments, now and then lazily cropping a mouthful of twig tips. Then he walked off with great strides in a straight line across the marsh, splashing among the wet water-plants, and ploughing through boggy spaces with the indifference begotten of vast strength and legs longer than those of any other animal on this continent. At times he entered beds of reeds which hid him from view, though their surging and bending showed the wake of his passage; at other times he

walked through meadows of tall grass, the withered yellow stalks rising to his flanks, while his body loomed above them, glistening black and wet in the level sunbeams. Once he stopped for a few moments on a rise of dry ground, seemingly to enjoy the heat of the young sun; he stood motionless, save that his ears were continually pricked, and his head sometimes slightly turned, showing that even in this remote land he was on the alert. Once, with a somewhat awkward motion, he reached his hind leg forward to scratch his neck. Then he walked forward again into the marsh; where the water was quite deep he broke into the long, stretching, springy trot, which forms the characteristic gait of his kind, churning the marsh water into foam. He held his head straight forwards, the antlers resting on his shoulders.

After awhile he reached a spruce island, through which he walked to and fro; but evidently could find therein no resting-place quite to his mind, for he soon left and went on to another. Here after a little wandering he chose a point where there was some thick young growth, which hid him from view when he lay down, though not when he stood. After some turning he settled himself in his bed just as a steer would.

He could not have chosen a spot better suited for us. He was nearly at the edge of the morass, the open space between the spruce clump where he was lying and the rocky foothills being comparatively dry and not much over a couple of hundred yards broad; while some sixty yards from it, and between it and

the hills, was a little hummock, tufted with firs, so as to afford us just the cover we needed. Keeping back from the edge of the morass we were able to walk upright through the forest, until we got the point where he was lying in a line with this little hummock. We then dropped on our hands and knees, and crept over the soft, wet sward, where there was nothing to make a noise. Wherever the ground rose at all we crawled flat on our bellies. The air was still, for it was a very calm morning.

At last we reached the hummock, and I got into position for a shot, taking a final look at my faithful 45–90 Winchester to see that all was in order. Peering cautiously through the shielding evergreens, I at first could not make out where the moose was lying, until my eye was caught by the motion of his big ears, as he occasionally flapped them lazily forward. Even then I could not see his outline; but I knew where he was, and having pushed my rifle forward on the moss, I snapped a dry twig to make him rise. My veins were thrilling and my heart beating with that eager, fierce excitement, known only to the hunter of big game, and forming one of the keenest and strongest of the many pleasures which with him go to make up "the wild joy of living."

As the sound of the snapping twig smote his ears the moose rose nimbly to his feet, with a lightness on which one would not have reckoned in a beast so heavy of body. He stood broadside to me for a moment, his ungainly head slightly turned, while his ears twitched and his nostrils snuffed the air.

Drawing a fine bead against his black hide, behind his shoulder and two thirds of his body's depth below his shaggy withers, I pressed the trigger. He neither flinched nor reeled, but started with his regular ground-covering trot through the spruces; yet I knew he was mine, for the light blood sprang from both of his nostrils, and he fell dying on his side before he had gone thirty rods.

Later in the fall I was again hunting among the lofty ranges which continue towards the southeast the chain of the Bitter Root, between Idaho and Montana. There were but two of us, and we were travelling very light, each having but one pack-pony and the saddle animal he bestrode. We were high among the mountains, and followed no regular trail. Hence our course was often one of extreme difficulty. Occasionally, we took our animals through the forest near timber line, where the slopes were not too steep; again we threaded our way through a line of glades, or skirted the foot-hills, in an open, park country; and now and then we had to cross stretches of tangled mountain forest, making but a few miles a day, at the cost of incredible toil, and accomplishing even this solely by virtue of the wonderful docility and sure-footedness of the ponies, and of my companion's skill with the axe and thorough knowledge of woodcraft.

Late one cold afternoon we came out in a high alpine valley in which there was no sign of any man's having ever been before us. Down its middle ran a clear brook. On each side was a belt of thick spruce forest, covering the lower flanks of the mountains. The trees

came down in points and isolated clumps to the brook, the banks of which were thus bordered with open glades, rendering the travelling easy and rapid.

Soon after starting up this valley we entered a beaver meadow of considerable size. It was covered with lush, rank grass, and the stream wound through it rather sluggishly in long curves, which were fringed by a thick growth of dwarfed willows. In one or two places it broadened into small ponds, bearing a few lily-pads. This meadow had been all tramped up by moose. Trails led hither and thither through the grass, the willow twigs were cropped off, and the muddy banks of the little black ponds were indented by hoof-marks. Evidently most of the lilies had been plucked. The footprints were unmistakable; a moose's foot is longer and slimmer than a caribou's, while on the other hand it is much larger than an elk's, and a longer oval in shape.

Most of the sign was old, this high alpine meadow, surrounded by snow mountains, having clearly been a favorite resort for moose in the summer; but some enormous, fresh tracks told that one or more old bulls were still frequenting the place.

The light was already fading, and, of course, we did not wish to camp where we were, because we would then certainly scare the moose. Accordingly we pushed up the valley for another mile, through an open forest, the ground being quite free from underbrush and dead timber, and covered with a carpet of thick moss, in which the feet sank noise-

lessly. Then we came to another beaver-meadow, which offered fine feed for the ponies. On its edge we hastily pitched camp, just at dusk. We tossed down the packs in a dry grove, close to the brook, and turned the tired ponies loose in the meadow, hobbling the little mare that carried the bell. The ground was smooth. We threw a cross-pole from one to the other of two young spruces, which happened to stand handily, and from it stretched and pegged out a piece of canvas, which we were using as a shelter tent. Beneath this we spread our bedding, laying under it the canvas sheets in which it had been wrapped. There was still bread left over from yesterday's baking, and in a few moments the kettle was boiling and the frying-pan sizzling, while one of us skinned and cut into suitable pieces two grouse we had knocked over on our march. For fear of frightening the moose we built but a small fire, and went to bed soon after supper, being both tired and cold. Fortunately, what little breeze there was blew up the valley.

At dawn I was awake, and crawled out of my buffalo bag, shivering and yawning. My companion still slumbered heavily. White frost covered whatever had been left outside. The cold was sharp, and I hurriedly slipped a pair of stout moccasins on my feet, drew on my gloves and cap, and started through the ghostly woods for the meadow where we had seen the moose sign. The tufts of grass were stiff with frost; black ice skimmed the edges and quiet places of the little brook.

I walked slowly, it being difficult not to

make a noise by cracking sticks or brushing against trees, in the gloom; but the forest was so open that it favored me. When I reached the edge of the beaver-meadow it was light enough to shoot, though the front sight still glimmered indistinctly. Streaks of cold red showed that the sun would soon rise.

Before leaving the shelter of the last spruces I halted to listen; and almost immediately heard a curious splashing sound from the middle of the meadow, where the brook broadened into small willow-bordered pools. I knew at once that a moose was in one of these pools, wading about and pulling up the water-lilies by seizing their slippery stems in his lips, plunging his head deep under water to do so. The moose love to feed in this way in the hot months, when they spend all the time they can in the water, feeding or lying down; nor do they altogether abandon the habit even when the weather is so cold that icicles form in their shaggy coats.

Crouching, I stole noiselessly along the edge of the willow-thicket. The stream twisted through it from side to side in zigzags, so that every few rods I got a glimpse down a lane of black water. In a minute I heard a slight splashing near me; and on passing the next point of bushes, I saw the shadowy outline of the moose's hindquarters, standing in a bend of the water. In a moment he walked onwards, disappearing. I ran forward a couple of rods, and then turned in among the willows, to reach the brook where it again bent back towards me. The splashing in the water, and the rustling of the moose's body

against the frozen twigs, drowned the little noise made by my moccasined feet.

I strode out on the bank at the lower end of a long narrow pool of water, dark and half frozen. In this pool, half way down and facing me, but a score of yards off, stood the mighty marsh beast, strange and uncouth in look as some monster surviving over from the Pliocene. His vast bulk loomed black and vague in the dim gray dawn; his huge antlers stood out sharply; columns of steam rose from his nostrils. For several seconds he fronted me motionless; then he began to turn, slowly, and as if he had a stiff neck. When quarter way round I fired into his shoulder; whereat he reared and bounded on the bank with great leap, vanishing in the willows. Through these I heard him crash like a whirlwind for a dozen rods; then down he fell, and when I reached the spot he had ceased to struggle. The ball had gone through his heart.

When a moose is thus surprised at close quarters, it will often stand at gaze for a moment or two, and then turn stiffly around until headed in the right direction; once thus headed aright it starts off with extraordinary speed.

The flesh of the moose is very good; though some deem it coarse. Old hunters, who always like rich, greasy food, rank a moose's nose with a beaver's tail, as the chief of backwood delicacies; personally I never liked either. The hide of the moose, like the hide of the elk, is of very poor quality, much inferior to ordinary buckskin; caribou hide is the best

of all, especially when used as webbing for snow-shoes.

The moose is very fond of frequenting swampy woods throughout the summer, and indeed late into the fall. These swampy woods are not necessarily in the lower valleys, some being found very high among the mountains. By preference it haunts those containing lakes, where it can find the long lily-roots of which it is so fond, and where it can escape the torment of the mosquitoes and deer-flies by lying completely submerged save for its nostrils. It is a bold and good swimmer, readily crossing lakes of large size; but it is of course easily slain if discovered by canoe-men while in the water. It travels well through bogs, but not as well as the caribou; and it will not venture on ice at all if it can possibly avoid it.

After the rut begins the animals roam everywhere through the woods; and where there are hardwood forests the winter-yard is usually made among them, on high ground, away from the swamps. In the mountains the deep snows drive the moose, like all other game, down to the lower valleys, in hard winters. In the summer it occasionally climbs to the very summits of the wooded ranges, to escape the flies; and it is said that in certain places where wolves are plenty the cows retire to the tops of the mountains to calve. More often, however, they select some patch of very dense cover, in a swamp or by a lake, for this purpose. Their ways of life of course vary with the nature of the country they frequent. In the towering

chains of the Rockies, clad in sombre and unbroken evergreen forests, their habits, in regard to winter and summer-homes, and choice of places of seclusion for cows with young calves and bulls growing their antlers, differ from those of their kind which haunt the comparatively low, hilly, lake-studded country of Maine and Nova Scotia, where the forests are of birch, beech, and maple, mixed with the pine, spruce, and hemlock.

The moose being usually monogamous is never found in great herds like the wapiti and caribou. Occasionally a troop of fifteen or twenty individuals may be seen, but this is rare; more often it is found singly, in pairs, or in family parties, composed of a bull, a cow, and two or more calves and yearlings. In yarding, two or more such families may unite to spend the winter together in an unusually attractive locality; and during the rut many bulls are sometimes found together, perhaps following the trail of a cow in single file.

In the fall, winter, and early spring, and in certain places during summer, the moose feeds principally by browsing, though always willing to vary its diet by mosses, lichens, fungi, and ferns. In the eastern forests, with their abundance of hardwood, the birch, maple, and moose-wood form its favorite food. In the Rocky Mountains, where the forests are almost purely evergreen, it feeds on such willows, alders, and aspens as it can find, and also, when pressed by necessity, on balsam, fir, spruce, and very young pine. It peels the bark between its hard palate and sharp lower teeth, to a height of seven or eight

feet; these "peelings" form conspicuous moose signs. It crops the juicy, budding twigs and stem tops to the same height; and if the tree is too tall it "rides" it, that is, straddles the slender trunk with its fore legs, pushing it over and walking up it until the desired branches are within reach. No beast is more destructive to the young growth of a forest than the moose. Where much persecuted it feeds in the late evening, early morning, and by moonlight. Where rarely disturbed it passes the day much as cattle do, alternately resting and feeding for two or three hours at a time.

Young moose, when caught, are easily tamed, and are very playful, delighting to gallop to and fro, kicking, striking, butting, and occasionally making grotesque faces. As they grow old they are apt to become dangerous, and even their play takes the form of a mock fight. Some lumbermen I knew on the Aroostook, in Maine, once captured a young moose, and put it in a pen of logs. A few days later they captured another, somewhat smaller, and put it in the same pen, thinking the first would be grateful at having a companion. But if it was it dissembled its feelings, for it promptly fell on the unfortunate new-comer and killed it before it could be rescued.

During the rut the bulls seek the cows far and wide, uttering continually throughout the night a short, loud roar, which can be heard at a distance of four or five miles; the cows now and then respond with low, plaintive bellows. The bulls also thrash the tree trunks with

their horns, and paw big holes in soft ground; and when two rivals come together at this season they fight with the most desperate fury. It is chiefly in these battles with one another that the huge antlers are used; in contending with other foes they strike terrible blows with their fore hoofs and also sometimes lash out behind like a horse. The bear occasionally makes a prey of the moose; the cougar is a more dangerous enemy in the few districts where both animals are found at all plentifully; but next to man its most dreaded foe is the big timber wolf, that veritable scourge of all animals of the deer kind. Against all of these the moose defends itself valiantly; a cow with a calf and a rutting bull being especially dangerous opponents. In deep snows through which the great deer flounders while its adversary runs lightly on the crust, a single wolf may overcome and slaughter a big bull moose; but with a fair chance no one or two wolves would be a match for it. Desperate combats take place before a small pack of wolves can master the shovel-horned quarry, unless it is taken at a hopeless disadvantage; and in these battles the prowess of the moose is shown by the fact that it is no unusual thing for it to kill one or more of the ravenous throng; generally by a terrific blow of the foreleg, smashing a wolf's skull or breaking its back. I have known of several instances of wolves being found dead, having perished in this manner. Still the battle usually ends the other way, the wolves being careful to make the attack with the odds in their favor; and even a small pack of the ferocious brutes

will in a single winter often drive the moose completely out of a given district. Both cougar and bear generally reckon on taking the moose unawares, when they jump on it. In one case that came to my knowledge a black bear was killed by a cow moose whose calf he had attacked.

In the northeast a favorite method of hunting the moose is by "calling" the bulls in the rutting season, at dawn or nightfall; the caller imitating their cries through a birch-bark trumpet. If the animals are at all wary, this kind of sport can only be carried on in still weather, as the approaching bull always tries to get the wind of the caller. It is also sometimes slain by fire-hunting, from a canoe, as the deer are killed in the Adirondacks. This, however, is but an ignoble sport; and to kill the animal while it is swimming in a lake is worse. However, there is sometimes a spice of excitement even in these unworthy methods of the chase; for a truculent moose will do its best, with hoofs and horns, to upset the boat.

The true way to kill the noble beast, however, is by fair still-hunting. There is no grander sport than still-hunting the moose, whether in the vast pine and birch forests of the northeast, or among the stupendous mountain masses of the Rockies. The moose has wonderfully keen nose and ears, though its eyesight is not remarkable. Most hunters assert that he is the wariest of all game, and the most difficult to kill. I have never been quite satisfied that this was so; it seems to me that the nature of the ground wherein it

dwells helps it even more than do its own sharp senses. It is true that I made many trips in vain before killing my first moose; but then I had to hunt through tangled timber, where I could hardly move a step without noise, and could never see thirty yards ahead. If moose were found in open park-like forests like those where I first killed elk, on the Bighorn Mountains, or among brushy coulies and bare hills, like the Little Missouri Bad Lands, where I first killed blacktail deer, I doubt whether they would prove especially difficult animals to bag. My own experience is much too limited to allow me to speak with any certainty on the point; but it is borne out by what more skilled hunters have told me. In the Big Hole Basin, in southwest Montana, moose were quite plentiful in the late 'seventies. Two or three of the old settlers, whom I know as veteran hunters and trustworthy men, have told me that in those times the moose were often found in very accessible localities; and that when such was the case they were quite as easily killed as elk. In fact, when run across by accident they frequently showed a certain clumsy slowness of apprehension which amounted to downright stupidity. One of the most successful moose-hunters I know is Col. Cecil Clay, of the Department of Law, in Washington; he it was who killed the moose composing the fine group mounted by Mr. Hornaday, in the National Museum. Col. Clay lost his right arm in the Civil War; but is an expert rifle shot nevertheless, using a short, light forty-four calibre old style Winchester carbine.

With this weapon he has killed over a score of moose, by fair still-hunting; and he tells me that on similar ground he considers it if anything rather less easy to still-hunt and kill a whitetail deer than it is to kill a moose.

My friend Col. James Jones killed two moose in a day in northwestern Wyoming, not far from the Tetons; he was alone when he shot them and did not find them especially wary. Ordinarily, moose are shot at fairly close range; but another friend of mine, Mr. E. P. Rogers, once dropped one with a single bullet, at a distance of nearly three hundred yards. This happened by Bridger's Lake, near Two Ocean Pass.

The moose has a fast walk, and its ordinary gait when going at any speed is a slashing trot. Its long legs give it a wonderful stride, enabling it to clear down-timber and high obstacles of all sorts without altering its pace. It also leaps well. If much pressed or startled it breaks into an awkward gallop, which is quite fast for a few hundred yards, but which speedily tires it out. After being disturbed by the hunter a moose usually trots a long distance before halting.

One thing which renders the chase of the moose particularly interesting is the fact that there is in it on rare occasions a spice of peril. Under certain circumstances it may be called dangerous quarry, being, properly speaking, the only animal of the deer kind which ever fairly deserves the title. In a hand to hand grapple an elk or caribou, or even under exceptional circumstances a blacktail or a white-

tail, may show itself an ugly antagonist; and indeed a maddened elk may for a moment take the offensive; but the moose is the only one of the tribe with which this attitude is at all common. In bodily strength and capacity to do harm it surpasses the elk; and in temper it is far more savage and more apt to show fight when assailed by man; exactly as the elk in these respects surpasses the common deer. Two hunters with whom I was well acquainted once wintered between the Wind River Mountains and the Three Tetons, many years ago, in the days of the buffalo. They lived on game, killing it on snowshoes; for the most part wapiti and deer, but also bison, and one moose, though they saw others. The wapiti bulls kept their antlers two months longer than the moose; nevertheless, when chased they rarely made an effort to use them, while the hornless moose displayed far more pugnacity, and also ran better through the deep snow. The winter was very severe, the snows were heavy and the crusts hard; so that the hunters had little trouble in overtaking their game, although—being old mountainmen, and not hide-hunters—they killed only what was needed. Of course in such hunting they came very close to the harried game, usually after a chase of from twenty minutes to three hours. They found that the ordinary deer would scarcely charge under any circumstances; that among the wapiti it was only now and then that individuals would turn upon their pursuers—though they sometimes charged boldly; but that both the bison and especially the moose when worried and ap-

proached too near, would often turn to bay and make charge after charge in the most resolute manner, so that they had to be approached with some caution.

Under ordinary conditions, however, there is very little danger, indeed, of a moose charging. A charge does not take place once in a hundred times when the moose is killed by fair still-hunting; and it is altogether exceptional for those who assail them from boats or canoes to be put in jeopardy. Even a cow moose, with her calf, will run if she has the chance; and a rutting bull will do the same. Such a bull when wounded may walk slowly forward, grunting savagely, stamping with his forefeet, and slashing the bushes with his antlers; but, if his antagonist is any distance off, he rarely actually runs at him. Yet there are now and then found moose prone to attack on slight provocation; for these great deer differ as widely as men in courage and ferocity. Occasionally a hunter is charged in the fall when he has lured the game to him by calling, or when he has wounded it after a stalk. In one well-authenticated instance which was brought to my attention, a settler on the left bank of the St. Johns, in New Brunswick, was tramped to death by a bull moose which he had called to him and wounded. A New Yorker of my acquaintance, Dr. Merrill, was charged under rather peculiar circumstances. He stalked and mortally wounded a bull which promptly ran towards him. Between them was a gully in which it disappeared. Immediately afterwards, as he thought, it reappeared on his side of the gully, and with

a second shot he dropped it. Walking forward he found to his astonishment that with his second bullet he had killed a cow moose; the bull lay dying in the gully, out of which he had scared the cow by his last rush.

However, speaking broadly, the danger to the still-hunter engaged in one of the legitimate methods of the chase is so small that it may be disregarded; for he usually kills his game at some little distance, while the moose, as a rule, only attacks if it has been greatly worried and angered, and if its pursuer is close at hand. When a moose is surprised and shot at by a hunter some way off, its one thought is of flight. Hence, the hunters who are charged by moose are generally those who follow them during the late winter and early spring, when the animals have yarded and can be killed on snow-shoes—by "crusting," as it is termed, a very destructive, and often a very unsportsman-like species of chase.

If the snow-fall is very light, moose do not yard at all; but in a hard winter they begin to make their yards in December. A "yard" is not, as some people seem to suppose, a trampled-down space, with definite boundaries; the term merely denotes the spot which a moose has chosen for its winter home, choosing it because it contains plenty of browse in the shape of young trees and saplings, and perhaps also because it is sheltered to some extent from the fiercest winds and heaviest snowdrifts. The animal travels to and fro across this space in straight lines and irregular circles after food, treading in its own footsteps, where practicable. As the

snow steadily deepens, these lines of travel become beaten paths. There results finally a space half a mile square—sometimes more, sometimes very much less, according to the lay of the land, and the number of moose yarding together—where the deep snow is seamed in every direction by a network of narrow paths along which a moose can travel at speed, its back level with the snow round about. Sometimes, when moose are very plenty, many of these yards lie so close together that the beasts can readily make their way from one to another. When such is the case, the most expert snow-shoer, under the most favorable conditions, cannot overtake them, for they can then travel very fast through the paths, keeping their gait all day. In the early decades of the present century, the first settlers in Aroostook County, Maine, while moose-hunting in winter, were frequently baffled in this manner.

When hunters approach an isolated yard the moose immediately leave it and run off through the snow. If there is no crust, and if their long legs can reach the ground, the snow itself impedes them but little, because of their vast strength and endurance. Snow-drifts which render an ordinary deer absolutely helpless, and bring even an elk to a standstill, offer no impediment whatever to a moose. If, as happens very rarely, the loose snow is of such depth that even the stilt-like legs of the moose cannot touch solid earth, it flounders and struggles forward for a little time, and then sinks exhausted; for a caribou is the only large animal which can travel

under such conditions. If there be a crust, even though the snow is not remarkably deep, the labor of the moose is vastly increased, as it breaks through at every step, cutting its legs and exhausting itself. A caribou, on the other hand, will go across a crust as well as a man on snow-shoes, and can never be caught by the latter, save under altogether exceptional conditions of snowfall and thaw.

"Crusting," or following game on snow-shoes, is, as the name implies, almost always practised after the middle of February, when thaws begin, and the snow crusts on top. The conditions for success in crusting moose and deer are very different. A crust through which a moose would break at every stride may carry a running deer without mishap; while the former animal would trot at ease through drifts in which the latter would be caught as if in a quicksand.

Hunting moose on snow, therefore, may be, and very often is, mere butchery; and because of this possibility or probability, and also because of the fact that it is by far the most destructive kind of hunting, and is carried on at a season when the bulls are hornless and the cows heavy with calf, it is rigidly and properly forbidden wherever there are good game-laws. Yet this kind of hunting may also be carried on under circumstances which render it if not a legitimate, yet a most exciting and manly sport, only to be followed by men of tried courage, hardihood, and skill. This is not because it ever necessitates any skill whatever in the use of the rifle, or any particular knowledge of hunting-craft; but

because under the conditions spoken of the hunter must show great endurance and resolution, and must be an adept in the use of snow-shoes.

It all depends upon the depth of the snow and the state of the crust. If when the snow is very deep there comes a thaw, and if it then freezes hard, the moose are overtaken and killed with ease; for the crust cuts their legs, they sink to their bellies at every plunge, and speedily become so worn out that they can no longer keep ahead of any man who is even moderately skilful in the use of snow-shoes; though they do not, as deer so often do, sink exhausted after going a few rods from their yard. Under such circumstances a few hardy hunters or settlers, who are perfectly reckless in slaughtering game, may readily kill all the moose in a district. It is a kind of hunting which just suits the ordinary settler, who is hardy and enduring, but knows little of hunting-craft proper.

If the snow is less deep, or the crust not so heavy, the moose may travel for scores of miles before it is overtaken; and this even though the crust be strong enough to bear a man wearing snow-shoes without breaking. The chase then involves the most exhausting fatigue. Moreover, it can be carried on only by those who are very skilful in the use of snow-shoes. These snow-shoes are of two kinds. In the northeast, and in the most tangled forests of the northwest, the webbed snow-shoes are used; on the bare mountain-sides, and in the open forests of the Rockies, the long narrow wooden skees, or Norwegian

snow-skates are preferred, as upon them men can travel much faster, though they are less handy in thick timber. Having donned his snow-shoes and struck the trail of a moose, the hunter may have to follow it three days if the snow is of only ordinary depth, with a moderate crust. He shuffles across the snow without halt while daylight lasts, and lies down wherever he happens to be when night strikes him, probably with a little frozen bread as his only food. The hunter thus goes through inordinate labor, and suffers from exposure; not infrequently his feet are terribly cut by the thongs of the snow-shoes, and become sore and swollen, causing great pain. When overtaken after such a severe chase, the moose is usually so exhausted as to be unable to make any resistance ; in all likelihood it has run itself to a standstill. Accordingly, the quality of the fire-arms makes but little difference in this kind of hunting. Many of the most famous old moose-hunters of Maine, in the long past days, before the Civil War, when moose were plenty there, used what were known as "three dollar" guns; light, single-barrelled smooth-bores. One whom I knew used a flint-lock musket. a relic of the War of 1812. Another in the course of an exhausting three days' chase lost the lock off his cheap, percussion-cap gun ; and when he overtook the moose he had to explode the cap by hammering it with a stone.

It is in "crusting," when the chase has lasted but a comparatively short time, that moose most frequently show fight; for they are not cast into a state of wild panic by a

sudden and unlooked-for attack by a man who is a long distance from them, but on the contrary, after being worried and irritated, are approached very near by foes from whom they have been fleeing for hours. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases even crusted moose make not the slightest attempt at retaliation. If the chase has been very long, or if the depth of the snow and character of the crust are exceptionally disadvantageous to them, they are so utterly done out, when overtaken, that they cannot make a struggle, and may even be killed with an axe. I know of at least five men who have thus killed crusted moose with an axe; one in the Rocky Mountains, one in Minnesota, three in Maine.

But in ordinary snow a man who should thus attempt to kill a moose would merely jeopardize his own life; and it is not an uncommon thing for chased moose, when closely approached by their pursuers, even when the latter carry guns and are expert snow-shoers, to charge them with such ferocity as to put them in much peril. A brother of one of my cow-hands, a man from Maine, was once nearly killed by a cow moose. She had been in a yard with her last year's calf when started. After two or three hours' chase he overtook them. They were travelling in single file, the cow breaking her path through the snow, while the calf followed close behind, and in his nervousness sometimes literally ran up on her. The man trotted close alongside; but, before he could fire, the old cow spun round and charged him, her mane bristling and her green

eyes snapping with rage. It happened that just there the snow became shallow, and the moose gained so rapidly that the man, to save his life, sprang up a tree. As he did so the cow reared and struck at him, one fore-foot catching in his snow-shoe and tearing it clear off, giving his ankle a bad wrench. After watching him a minute or two she turned and continued her flight; whereupon he climbed down the tree, patched up his torn snow-shoe and limped after the moose, which he finally killed.

An old hunter named Purvis told me of an adventure of the kind, which terminated fatally. He was hunting near the Cœur d'Alene Mountains with a mining prospector named Pingree; both were originally from New Hampshire. Late in November there came a heavy fall of snow, deep enough to soon bring a deer to a standstill, although not so deep as to hamper a moose's movement. The men bound on their skees and started to the borders of a lake, to kill some blacktail. In a thicket close to the lake's brink they suddenly came across a bull moose; a lean old fellow, still savage from the rut. Pingree, who was nearest, fired at and wounded him; whereupon he rushed straight at the man, knocked him down before he could turn round on his skees, and began to pound him with his terrible forefeet. Summoned by his comrade's despairing cries, Purvis rushed round the thickets, and shot the squealing, trampling monster through the body, and immediately after had to swing himself up a small tree to avoid its furious rush. The moose did not

turn after this charge, but kept straight on, and was not seen again. The wounded man was past all help, for his chest was beaten in, and he died in a couple of hours.

CHAPTER XII.

HUNTING LORE.

IT has been my good-luck to kill every kind of game properly belonging to the United States: though one beast which I never had a chance to slay, the jaguar, from the torrid South, sometimes comes just across the Rio Grande; nor have I ever hunted the musk-ox and polar bear in the boreal wastes where they dwell, surrounded by the frozen desolation of the uttermost North.

I have never sought to make large bags, for a hunter should not be a game butcher. It is always lawful to kill dangerous or noxious animals, like the bear, cougar, and wolf; but other game should only be shot when there is need of the meat, or for the sake of an unusually fine trophy. Killing a reasonable number of bulls, bucks, or rams does no harm whatever to the species; to slay half the males of any kind of game would not stop the natural increase, and they yield the best sport, and are the legitimate objects of the chase. Cows, does, and ewes, on the contrary, should only be killed (unless barren) in case of necessity; during my last five years' hunting I have killed

but five—one by a mischance, and the other four for the table.

From its very nature, the life of the hunter is in most places evanescent; and when it has vanished there can be no real substitute in old settled countries. Shooting in a private game preserve is but a dismal parody; the manliest and healthiest features of the sport are lost with the change of conditions. We need, in the interest of the community at large, a rigid system of game laws rigidly enforced, and it is not only admissible, but one may almost say necessary, to establish, under the control of the State, great national forest reserves, which shall also be breeding grounds and nurseries for wild game; but I should much regret to see grow up in this country a system of large private game preserves, kept for the enjoyment of the very rich. One of the chief attractions of the life of the wilderness is its rugged and stalwart democracy; there every man stands for what he actually is, and can show himself to be.

There are, in different parts of our country, chances to try so many various kinds of hunting, with rifle or with horse and hound, that it is nearly impossible for one man to have experience of them all. There are many hunts I long hoped to take, but never did and never shall; they must be left for men with more time, or for those whose homes are nearer to the hunting grounds. I have never seen a grisly roped by the riders of the plains, nor a black bear killed with the knife and

hounds in the southern canebrakes; though at one time I had for many years a standing invitation to witness this last feat on a plantation in Arkansas. The friend who gave it, an old backwoods planter, at one time lost almost all his hogs by the numerous bears who infested his neighborhood. He took a grimly humorous revenge each fall by doing his winter killing among the bears instead of among the hogs they had slain; for as the cold weather approached he regularly proceeded to lay in a stock of bear-bacon, scouring the canebrakes in a series of systematic hunts, bringing the quarry to bay with the help of a big pack of hard-fighting mongrels, and then killing it with his long, broad-bladed bowie.

Again, I should like to make a trial at killing peccaries with the spear, whether on foot or on horseback, and with or without dogs. I should like much to repeat the experience of a friend who cruised northward through Bering Sea, shooting walrus and polar bear; and that of two other friends who travelled with dog-sleds to the Barren Grounds, in chase of the caribou, and of that last survivor of the Ice Age, the strange musk-ox. Once in a while it must be good sport to shoot alligators by torchlight in the everglades of Florida or the bayous of Louisiana.

If the big-game hunter, the lover of the rifle, has a taste for kindred field sports with rod and shotgun, many are his chances for pleasure, though perhaps of a less intense kind. The wild turkey really deserves a place

beside the deer; to kill a wary old gobbler with the small-bore rifle, by fair still-hunting, is a triumph for the best sportsman. Swans, geese, and sandhill cranes likewise may sometimes be killed with the rifle; but more often all three, save perhaps the swan, must be shot over decoys. Then there is prairie-chicken shooting on the fertile grain prairies of the middle West, from Minnesota to Texas; and killing canvas-backs from behind blinds, with the help of that fearless swimmer, the Chesapeake Bay dog. In Californian mountains and valleys live the beautiful plumed quails, and who does not know their cousin bob-white, the bird of the farm, with his cheery voice and friendly ways? For pure fun, nothing can surpass a night scramble through the woods after coon and possum.

The salmon, whether near Puget Sound or the St. Lawrence, is the royal fish; his only rival is the giant of the warm Gulf waters, the silver-mailed tarpon; while along the Atlantic coast the great striped bass likewise yields fine sport to the men of rod and reel. Every hunter of the mountains and the northern woods knows the many kinds of spotted trout; for the black bass he cares less; and least of all for the sluggish pickerel, and his big brother of the Great Lakes, the muscallonge.

Yet the sport yielded by rod and smooth-bore is really less closely kin to the strong pleasures so beloved by the hunter who trusts in horse and rifle than are certain other out-door pastimes, of the rougher and hardier kind.

Such a pastime is snow-shoeing, whether with webbed rackets, in the vast northern forests, or with skees, on the bare slopes of the Rockies. Such is mountaineering, especially when joined with bold exploration of the unknown. Most of our mountains are of rounded shape, and though climbing them is often hard work, it is rarely difficult or dangerous, save in bad weather, or after a snowfall. But there are many of which this is not true; the Tetons, for instance, and various glacier-bearing peaks in the Northwest; while the lofty, snow-clad ranges of British Columbia and Alaska offer one of the finest fields in the world for the daring cragsman. Mountaineering is among the manliest of sports; and it is to be hoped that some of our young men with a taste for hard work and adventure among the high hills will attempt the conquest of these great untrodden mountains of their own continent. As with all pioneer work, there would be far more discomfort and danger, far more need to display resolution, hardihood, and wisdom in such an attempt than in any expedition on well known and historic ground like the Swiss Alps; but the victory would be a hundredfold better worth winning.

The dweller or sojourner in the wilderness who most keenly loves and appreciates his wild surroundings, and all their sights and sounds, is the man who also loves and appreciates the books which tell of them.

Foremost of all American writers on outdoor life is John Burroughs; and I can

scarcely suppose that any man who cares for existence outside the cities would willingly be without anything that he has ever written. To the naturalist, to the observer and lover of nature, he is of course worth many times more than any closet systematist; and though he has not been very much in really wild regions, his pages so thrill with the sights and sounds of outdoor life that nothing by any writer who is a mere professional scientist or a mere professional hunter can take their place, or do more than supplement them—for scientist and hunter alike would do well to remember that before a book can take the highest rank in any particular line it must also rank high in literature proper. Of course, for us Americans, Burroughs has a peculiar charm that he cannot have for others, no matter how much they, too, may like him; for what he writes of is our own, and he calls to our minds memories and associations that are very dear. His books make us homesick when we read them in foreign lands; for they spring from our soil as truly as *Snowbound* or *The Biglow Papers*.[1]

[1] I am under many obligations to the writings of Mr. Burroughs (though there are one or two of his theories from which I should dissent); and there is a piece of indebtedness in this very volume of which I have only just become aware. In my chapter on the prong-buck there is a paragraph which will at once suggest to any lover of Burroughs some sentences in his essay on "Birds and Poets." I did not notice the resemblance until happening to reread the essay after my own chapter was written, and at the time I had no idea that I was borrowing from anybody, the more so as I was thinking purely of western wilderness life and western wilderness game, with which I knew Mr. Burroughs had never been familiar. I have concluded to leave the paragraph in with this acknowledgment.

As a woodland writer, Thoreau comes second only to Burroughs.

For natural history in the narrower sense there are still no better books than Audubon and Bachman's Mammals and Audubon's Birds. There are also good works by men like Coues and Bendire; and if Hart Merriam, of the Smithsonian, will only do for the mammals of the United States what he has already done for those of the Adirondacks, we shall have the best book of its kind in existence. Nor, among less technical writings, should one overlook such essays as those of Maurice Thompson and Olive Thorne Miller.

There have been many American hunting-books; but too often they have been very worthless, even when the writers possessed the necessary first hand knowledge, and the rare capacity of seeing the truth. Few of the old-time hunters ever tried to write of what they had seen and done; and of those who made the effort fewer still succeeded. Innate refinement and the literary faculty—that is, the faculty of writing a thoroughly interesting and readable book, full of valuable information—may exist in uneducated people; but if they do not, no amount of experience in the field can supply their lack. However, we have had some good works on the chase and habits of big game, such as Caton's *Deer and Antelope of America*, Van Dyke's *Still-Hunter*, Elliott's *Carolina Sports*, and Dodge's *Hunting Grounds of the Great West*, besides the Century Company's *Sport with Rod and Gun*.

Then there is Catlin's book, and the journals of the explorers from Lewis and Clarke down; and occasional volumes on outdoor life, such as Theodore Winthrop's *Canoe and Saddle*, and Clarence King's *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada*.

Two or three of the great writers of American literature, notably Parkman in his *Oregon Trail* and, with less interest, Irving in his *Trip on the Prairies* have written with power and charm of life in the American wilderness; but no one has arisen to do for the far western plainsman and Rocky Mountain trappers quite what Hermann Melville did for the South Sea whaling folk in *Omoo* and *Moby Dick*. The best description of these old-time dwellers among the mountains and on the plains is to be found in a couple of good volumes by the Englishman Ruxton. However, the backwoodsmen proper, both in their forest homes and when they first began to venture out on the prairie, have been portrayed by a master hand. In a succession of wonderfully drawn characters, ranging from "Aaron Thousand-acres" to "Ishmael Bush," Fenimore Cooper has preserved for always the likenesses of these stark pioneer settlers and backwoods hunters; uncouth, narrow, hard, suspicious, but with all the virile virtues of a young and masterful race, a race of mighty breeders, mighty fighters, mighty commonwealth builders. As for Leatherstocking, he is one of the undying men of story; grand, simple, kindly, pure-

minded, staunchly loyal, the type of the steel-thewed and iron-willed hunter-warrior.

Turning from the men of fiction to the men of real life, it is worth noting how many of the leaders among our statesmen and soldiers have sought strength and pleasure in the chase, or in kindred vigorous pastimes. Of course field sports, or at least the wilder kinds, which entail the exercise of daring, and the endurance of toil and hardship, and which lead men afar into the forests and mountains, stand above athletic exercises; exactly as among the latter, rugged outdoor games, like football and lacrosse, are much superior to mere gymnastics and calisthenics.

With a few exceptions the men among us who have stood foremost in political leadership, like their fellows who have led our armies, have been of stalwart frame and sound bodily health. When they sprang from the frontier folk, as did Lincoln and Andrew Jackson, they usually hunted much in their youth, if only as an incident in the prolonged warfare waged by themselves and their kinsmen against the wild forces of nature. Old Israel Putnam's famous wolf-killing feat comes strictly under this head. Doubtless he greatly enjoyed the excitement of the adventure; but he went into it as a matter of business, not of sport. The wolf, the last of its kind in his neighborhood, had taken heavy toll of the flocks of himself and his friends; when they found the deep cave in which it had made its den it readily beat off the dogs sent in to as-

sail it; and so Putnam crept in himself, with his torch and his flint-lock musket, and shot the beast where it lay.

When such men lived in long settled and thickly peopled regions, they needs had to accommodate themselves to the conditions and put up with humbler forms of sport. Webster, like his great rival for Whig leadership, Henry Clay, cared much for horses, dogs, and guns; but though an outdoor man he had no chance to develop a love for big-game hunting. He was, however, very fond of the rod and shotgun. Mr. Cabot Lodge recently handed me a letter written to his grandfather by Webster, and describing a day's trout fishing. It may be worth giving for the sake of the writer, and because of the fine heartiness and zest in enjoyment which it shows:

SANDWICH, June 4,
Saturday mor'g
6 o'clock

DEAR SIR:

I send you eight or nine trout, which I took yesterday, in that chief of all brooks, Mashpee. I made a long day of it, and with good success, for me. John was with me, full of good advice, but did not fish—nor carry a rod.

I took 26 trouts, all weighing	17 lb. 12 oz.
The largest (you have him) weighed at Crokers. .	2 " 4 "
The 5 largest	3 " 5 "
The eight largest . . .	11 " 8 "

I got these by following your advice; that is, *by careful & thorough* fishing of the difficult places, which others do not fish. The brook is fished, nearly every day. I entered it, not so high up as we sometimes do, between 7 & 8 o'clock, & at 12 was hardly more than half way down to the meeting house path. You see I did

not hurry. The day did not hold out to fish the whole brook properly. The largest trout I took at 3 P. M. (you see I am precise) below the meeting house, under a bush on the right bank, two or three rods below the large *beeches*. It is singular, that in the whole day, I did not take two trouts out of the same hole. I found both ends. or parts of the Brook about equally productive. Small fish not plenty, in either. So many hooks get everything which is not hid away in the manner large trouts take care of themselves. I hooked one, which I suppose to be larger than any which I took, as he broke my line, by fair pulling, after I had pulled him out of his den, & was playing him in fair open water.

Of what I send you, I pray you keep what you wish yourself, send three to Mr. Ticknor, & three to Dr. Warren; or two of the larger ones, to each will perhaps be enough—& if there be any left, there is Mr. Callender & Mr. Blake, & Mr. Davis, either of them not "averse to fish." Pray let Mr. Davis *see* them—especially the large one.—As he promised to come, & fell back, I desire to excite his regrets. I hope you will have the large one on your own table.

The day was fine—not another hook in the Brook. John steady as a judge—and everything else exactly right. I never, on the whole, had so agreeable a day's fishing tho' the result, in pounds or numbers, is not great;—nor ever expect such another.

Please preserve this letter; but rehearse not these particulars to the uninitiated.

I think the Limerick *not* the best hook. Whether it pricks too soon, or for what other reason, I found or thought I found the fish more likely to let go his hold, from this, than from the old-fashioned hook.

Yrs.

H. Cabot, Esq. D. Webster.

The greatest of Americans, Washington, was very fond of hunting, both with rifle or fowling-piece, and especially with horse, horn and hound. Essentially the representative of all that is best in our national life standing high as a general, high as a statesman, and

highest of all as a man, he could never have been what he was had he not taken delight in feats of hardihood, of daring, and of bodily prowess. He was strongly drawn to those field sports which demand in their follower the exercise of the manly virtues—courage, endurance, physical address. As a young man, clad in the distinctive garb of the backwoodsman, the fringed and tasselled hunting-shirt, he led the life of a frontier surveyor; and like his fellow adventurers in wilderness exploration and Indian campaigning, he was often forced to trust to the long rifle for keeping his party in food. When at his home, at Mount Vernon, he hunted from simple delight in the sport.

His manuscript diaries, preserved in the State Department at Washington, are full of entries concerning his feats in the chase; almost all of them naturally falling in the years between the ending of the French war and the opening of the Revolutionary struggle against the British, or else in the period separating his service as Commander-in-chief of the Continental armies from his term of office as President of the Republic. These entries are scattered through others dealing with his daily duties in overseeing his farm and mill, his attendance at the Virginia House of Burgesses, his journeys, the drill of the local militia, and all the various interests of his many-sided life. Fond though he was of hunting, he was wholly incapable of the career of inanity led by those who make sport, not a

manly pastime, but the one serious business of their lives.

The entries in the diaries are short, and are couched in the homely vigorous English, so familiar to the readers of Washington's journals and private letters. Sometimes they are brief jottings in reference to shooting trips; such as: "Rid out with my gun"; "went pheasant hunting"; "went ducking," and "went a gunning up the Creek." But far more often they are: "Rid out with my hounds," "went a fox hunting," or "went a hunting." In their perfect simplicity and good faith they are strongly characteristic of the man. He enters his blank days and failures as conscientiously as his red-letter days of success; recording with equal care on one day, "Fox hunting with Captain Posey—catch a Fox," and another, "Went a hunting with Lord Fairfax . . . catched nothing."

Occasionally he began as early as August and continued until April; and while he sometimes made but eight or ten hunts in a season, at others he made as many in a month. Often he hunted from Mt. Vernon, going out once or twice a week, either alone or with a party of his friends and neighbors; and again he would meet with these same neighbors at one of their houses, and devote several days solely to the chase. The country was still very wild, and now and then game was encountered with which the fox-hounds proved unable to cope; as witness entries like: "found both a Bear and a Fox, but got

neither"; "went a hunting . . . started a Deer & then a Fox but got neither"; and "Went a hunting and after trailing a fox a good while the Dogs Raized a Deer & ran out of the Neck with it & did not some of them at least come home till the next day." If it was a small animal, however, it was soon accounted for. "Went a Hunting . . . catched a Rakoon but never found a Fox."

The woods were so dense and continuous that it was often impossible for the riders to keep close to the hounds throughout the run; though in one or two of the best covers, as the journal records, Washington "directed paths to be cut for Fox Hunting." This thickness of the timber made it difficult to keep the hounds always under control; and there are frequent allusions to their going off on their own account, as "Joined some dogs that were self hunting." Sometimes the hounds got so far away that it was impossible to tell whether they had killed or not, the journal remarking "catched nothing that we know of," or "found a fox at the head of the blind Pocoson which we suppose was killed in an hour but could not find it."

Another result of this density and continuity of cover was the frequent recurrence of days of ill success. There are many such entries as: "Went Fox hunting, but started nothing"; "Went a hunting, but catched nothing"; "found nothing"; "found a Fox and lost it." Often failure followed long and hard runs: "Started a Fox, run him four

hours, took the Hounds off at night"; "found a Fox and run it 6 hours and then lost"; "Went a hunting above Darrells . . . found a fox by two Dogs but lost it upon joining the Pack." In the season of 1772–73 Washington hunted eighteen days and killed nine foxes; and though there were seasons when he was out much more often, this proportion of kills to runs was if anything above the average. At the beginning of 1768 he met with a series of blank days which might well have daunted a less patient and persevering hunter. In January and the early part of February he was out nine times without getting a thing; but his diary does not contain a word of disappointment or surprise, each successive piece of ill-luck being entered without comment, even when one day he met some more fortunate friends "who had just catched 2 foxes." At last, on February 12th, he himself "catched two foxes"; the six or eight gentlemen of the neighborhood who made up the field all went home with him to Mt. Vernon, to dine and pass the night, and in the hunt of the following day they repeated the feat of a double score. In the next seven days' hunting he killed four times.

The runs of course varied greatly in length; on one day he "found a bitch fox at Piney Branch and killed it in an hour"; on another he "killed a Dog fox after having him on foot three hours & hard running an hour and a qr."; and on yet another he "catched a fox with a bobd Tail & cut ears after 7 hours chase in

which most of the Dogs were worsted." Sometimes he caught his fox in thirty-five minutes, and again he might run it nearly the whole day in vain; the average run seems to have been from an hour and a half to three hours. Sometimes the entry records merely the barren fact of the run; at others a few particulars are given, with homespun, telling directness, as: "Went a hunting with Jacky Custis and catched a Bitch Fox after three hours chase—founded it on ye. ck. by I. Soals"; or went a Fox hunting with Lund Washington—took the drag of a fox by Isaac Gates & carrd. it tolerably well to the old Glebe then touched now and then upon a cold scent till we came into Col. Fairfaxes Neck where we found about half after three upon the Hills just above Accotinck Creek—after running till quite Dark took off the Dogs and came home."

The foxes were doubtless mostly of the gray kind, and besides going to holes they treed readily. In January, 1770, he was out seven days, killing four foxes; and two of the entries in the journal relate to foxes which treed; one, on the 10th, being, "I went a hunting in the Neck and visited the plantn. there found and killed a bitch fox after treeing it 3 t. chasg. it abt. 3 hrs.," and the other on the 23d: "Went a hunting after breakfast & found a Fox at muddy hole & killed her (it being a bitch) after a chase of better than two hours and after treeing her twice the last of which times she fell dead out of the Tree

after being therein sevl. minutes apparently." In April, 1769, he hunted four days, and on every occasion the fox treed. April 7th, "Dog fox killed, ran an hour & treed twice." April 11th, "Went a fox hunting and took a fox alive after running him to a Tree—brot him home." April 12th, "Chased the above fox an hour & 45 minutes when he treed again after which we lost him." April 13th, "Killed a dog fox after treeing him in 35 minutes."

Washington continued his fox-hunting until, in the spring of 1775, the guns of the minutemen in Massachusetts called him to the command of the Revolutionary soldiery. When the eight weary years of campaigning were over, he said good-by to the war-worn veterans whom he had led through defeat and disaster to ultimate triumph, and became once more a Virginia country gentleman. Then he took up his fox-hunting with as much zest as ever. The entries in his journal are now rather longer, and go more into detail than formerly. Thus, on December 12th, 1785, he writes that after an early breakfast he went on a hunt and found a fox at half after ten, "being first plagued with the dogs running hogs," followed on his drag for some time, then ran him hard for an hour, when there came a fault; but when four dogs which had been thrown out rejoined the pack they put the fox up afresh, and after fifty minutes' run killed him in an open field, "every Rider & every Dog being present at

the Death." With his usual alternations between days like this, and days of ill-luck, he hunted steadily every season until his term of private life again drew to a close and he was called to the headship of the nation he had so largely helped to found.

In a certain kind of fox-hunting lore there is much reference to a Warwickshire squire who, when the Parliamentary and Royalist armies were forming for the battle at Edgehill, was discovered between the hostile lines, unmovedly drawing the covers for a fox. Now, this placid sportsman should by rights have been slain offhand by the first trooper who reached him, whether Cavalier or Roundhead. He had mistaken means for ends, he had confounded the healthful play which should fit a man for needful work with the work itself; and mistakes of this kind are sometimes criminal. Hardy sports of the field offer the best possible training for war; but they become contemptible when indulged in while the nation is at death-grips with her enemies.

It was not in Washington's strong nature to make such an error. Nor yet, on the other hand, was he likely to undervalue either the pleasure, or the real worth of outdoor sports. The qualities of heart, mind, and body, which made him delight in the hunting-field, and which he there exercised and developed, stood him in good stead in many a long campaign and on many a stricken field; they helped to build that stern capacity for leadership in war

which he showed alike through the bitter woe of the winter at Valley Forge, on the night when he ferried his men across the half-frozen Delaware to the overthrow of the German mercenaries at Trenton, and in the brilliant feat of arms whereof the outcome was the decisive victory of Yorktown.

APPENDIX.

IN this volume I have avoided repeating what was contained in either of my former books, the *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* and *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*. For many details of life and work in the cattle country I must refer the reader to these two volumes; and also for more full accounts of the habits and methods of hunting such game as deer and antelope. As far as I know, the description in my *Ranch Life* of the habits and the chase of the mountain sheep is the only moderately complete account thereof that has ever been published. The five game-heads figured in this volume are copied exactly from the originals, now in my home; the animals were, of course, shot by myself.

There have been many changes, both in my old hunting-grounds and my old hunting-friends, since I first followed the chase in the far western country. Where the buffalo and the Indian ranged, along the Little Missouri, the branded herds of the ranchmen now graze; the scene of my elk-hunt at Two Ocean Pass is now part of the National Forest Reserve; settlers and miners have invaded the ground where I killed bear and moose; and steamers ply on the lonely waters of Kootenai Lake.

Of my hunting companions some are alive; others—among them my staunch and valued friend, Will Dow, and crabbed, surly old Hank Griffen—are dead; while yet others have drifted away, and I know not what has become of them.

I have made no effort to indicate the best kind of camp kit for hunting, for the excellent reason that it depends so much upon the kind of trip taken, and upon the circumstances of the person taking it. The hunting trip may be made with a pack-train, or with a wagon, or with a canoe, or on foot; and the hunter may have half a dozen attendants, or he may go absolutely alone. I have myself made trips under all of these circumstances. At times I have gone with two or three men, several tents and an elaborate apparatus for cooking, caser of canned goods, and the like. On the othes hand, I have made trips on horseback, with nothing whatsoever beyond what I had on, save my oil-skin slicker, a metal cup, and some hardtack, tea, and salt in the saddle pockets; and I have gone for a week or two's journey on foot, carrying on my shoulders my blanket, a frying-pan, some salt, a little flour, a small chunk of bacon, and a hatchet. So it is with dress. The clothes should be stout, of a neutral tint; the hat should be soft, without too large a brim; the shoes heavy, and the soles studded with small nails, save when moccasins orrubber-soled shoes are worn; but within these limits there is room for plenty of variation. Avoid, however, the so-called

deer-stalker's cap, which is an abomination ; its peaked brim giving no protection whatsoever to the eyes when facing the sun quartering, a position in which many shots must be taken. In very cold regions, fur coats, caps, and mittens, and all-wool underclothing are necessary. I dislike rubber boots when they can possibly be avoided. In hunting in snow in the winter I use the so-called German socks and felt overshoes where possible. One winter I had an ermine cap made. It was very good for peeping over the snowy ridge crests when game was on the other side ; but, except when the entire landscape was snow-covered, it was an unmitigated nuisance. In winter, webbed snow-shoes are used in the thick woods, and skees in the open country.

There is an endless variety of opinion about rifles, and all that can be said with certainty is that any good modern rifle will do. It is the man behind the rifle that counts, after the weapon has reached a certain stage of perfection. One of my friends invariably uses an old Government Springfield, a 45-calibre, with an ounce bullet. Another cares for nothing but the 40–90 Sharps', a weapon for which I myself have much partiality. Another uses always the old 45-calibre Sharps', and yet another the 45–calibre Remington. Two of the best bear and elk hunters I know prefer the 32 and 38-calibre Marlin's, with long cartridges, weapons with which I myself would not undertake to produce any good results. Yet others prefer pieces of very

large calibre. The amount of it is that each one of these guns possesses some excellence which the others lack, but which is in most cases atoned for by some corresponding defect. Simplicity of mechanism is very important, but so is rapidity of fire; and it is hard to get both of them developed to the highest degree in the same piece. In the same way, flatness of trajectory, penetration, range, shock, and accuracy are all qualities which must be attained; but to get one in perfection usually means the sacrifice of some of the rest. For instance, other things being equal, the smallest calibre has the greatest penetration, but gives the least shock; while a very flat trajectory, if acquired by heavy charges of powder, means the sacrifice of accuracy. Similarly, solid and hollow pointed bullets have, respectively, their merits and demerits. There is no use of dogmatizing about weapons. Some which prove excellent for particular countries and kinds of hunting are useless in others.

There seems to be no doubt, judging from the testimony of sportsmen in South Africa and in India, that very heavy calibre double-barrelled rifles are best for use in the dense jungles and against the thick-hided game of those regions; but they are of very little value with us. In 1882 one of the buffalo hunters on the Little Missouri obtained from some Englishman a double-barrelled ten-bore rifle of the kind used against rhinoceros, buffalo, and elephant in the Old World; but it proved very inferior to the 40- and 45-calibre Sharps'

buffalo guns when used under the conditions of American buffalo hunting, the tremendous shock given by the bullet not compensating for the gun's great relative deficiency in range and accuracy, while even the penetration was inferior at ordinary distances. It is largely also a matter of individual taste. At one time I possessed a very expensive double-barrelled 500 Express, by one of the crack English makers; but I never liked the gun, and could not do as well with it as with my repeater, which cost barely a sixth as much. So one day I handed it to a Scotch friend, who was manifestly ill at ease with a Winchester exactly like my own. He took to the double-barrel as naturally as I did to the repeater, and did excellent work with it. Personally, I have always preferred the Winchester. I now use a 45–90, with my old buffalo gun, a 40–90 Sharps' as spare rifle. Both, of course, have specially tested barrels, and are stocked and sighted to suit myself.

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